

The Florentine Celebrations of 1459

Translation by Nerida Newbiggin

of

Le onoranze fiorentine del 1459

Anonymous description in *terza rima*

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale
MS Magliabechiano VII 1121
(formerly MS Strozzi 4 391)

known also as

*Poem in terza rima in praise of Cosimo de' Medici and
his sons and of the ceremonies held in the year 1458
[sic] in honour of the son of the Duke of Milan and of
the Pope when they came to Florence*

For an edition of the Italian text, see:

“*Le onoranze fiorentine del 1459: poema anonimo,*”
Letteratura italiana antica 12 (2011): 17–135.

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The Florentine Celebrations of 1459

In 1459 Francesco Sforza sent his fifteen-year-old son Galeazzo to Florence, to visit his old friend Cosimo. At the same time, Florence received Pope Pius II, on his way to Mantua where he would die as he was attempting to raise the last Crusade. Between 17 April and 3 May, Florence and her leading citizens, Cosimo, Giovanni and Piero de' Medici organized a series of lavish celebrations: as well as providing for ceremonial entries and for accommodation and food for the visitors and their extensive courts, they organized religious services, banquets, an excursion to Careggi, a joust in Piazza Santa Croce, a dance in the Mercato Vecchio, an animal "hunt" in Piazza della Signoria, a performance of the Ascension in Santa Maria del Carmine, and a Petrarchan "Triumph of Love" (out of the ten-year-old Lorenzo's private purse) followed by an *armeggeria* in the Via Larga, in front of the Medici palace.

The organizing committee was attended by a notary who will have made an official record of the event, but that record was also made available to two contending poets, both anonymous. The shorter description, a mere 1705 lines of *terza rima*, found in MS Magliabechiano xxv 24, was published in full in 1770, and again in 1907. Our description, also in *terza rima* but three times the length, has been published in bits and pieces since 1907.¹

Why a translation?

In the course of preparing an edition of the Italian text of this poem, I became aware that others had dipped into it and cited and translated it with insufficient familiarity with the poet's language or with his copyist's hand. The text is of such importance to historians of Florentine art and pageantry that a new and full translation was warranted.

Translation is also an excellent tool for the editor: if a passage defies translation then the transcription is probably not correct. Sometimes it is a comma that needs revision; sometimes it is a grievous error to which eye and ear were blind and deaf in the first instance.

The Italian verse is doggerel, but it does bounce along. My first effort to translate it into prose left me with a slag heap that did no justice to the original. I started again with verse, unrhymed pentameters, which lack Miltonian rigour of a final stressed syllable and accept the inevitability of an overuse of weak final syllables. I have tried to avoid archaisms and anachronisms, and "poetic" inversions, attempting instead to maintain a smooth vernacular flow. I have attempted to account for every word of the original, and this translation would best be read in conjunction with the Italian version.

Our poet, perhaps a herald of the Signoria, pads his lines with adjectives: *degno*, *gentile*, *bello*, and *grande* are probably the chief offenders. I have tried to translate them, but not despaired when I have had to incorporate them into a single descriptor.

¹ See *Ricordi di Firenze*, ed. Tartini (1770) and Volpi (1891, 1902, 1907); and Bibliography below.

The poet is not afraid to use a Latin word when rhyme or rhythm dictate. Throughout, we find *virī* (Latin) beside *uomini* (Italian) for ‘men’; *civī* and *cittadini* ‘citizens’; *conclusīve* (Latin adverb) and *in conclusione* ‘in conclusion’; but also far more obscurely *deme* (in rhyme with *geme* and *treme*) from Latin *deemere* ‘lift, relieve, remove’. I have left some, but not others.

The final version, all 5,154 lines of it (Dante’s *Commedia* is 14,233 lines), is no improvement on the original, but I hope it will guarantee it a wider audience.

Introduction

The reader who would like a comprehensive introduction to the poem is referred to the article by Maria Patrizia Ceccarelli (see Bibliography). My own introduction to the edition of the poem, in “*Le onoranze fiorentine del 1459: poemetto anonimo del codice Magliabechiano VII.1121*,” *Letteratura italiana antica* 12 (2011): 17–21, does not represent material she had already published.

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**Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale
Centrale, MS Magliabechiano VII.1121 (formerly MS
Strozzi, Series 4, No. 391)**

[f. 1r, in the hand of Carlo Strozzi] *Poem in terza rima in praise
of Cosimo de' Medici and his sons and of the ceremonies held
in the year 1458[/9] in honour of the son of the Duke of Milan
and of the Pope when they came to Florence*

All praise and glory to the eternal Father,
and to the Holy Ghost and to the Son,
3 in Trinity united and one government.
Praise to the virgin Violet, white and pure,
the Word's progenitor, our gentle Mary,
6 whom I do worship with my heart and mind.
All praise to all the blessed court of heaven
that ever was created, and the happy
9 hierarchy of the great angelic choir.
All praise and glory of the mighty prophet
who even from within his mother's loins
12 in whispered gestures venerated Christ.
O virgin prophet, glorified in Heaven,
greater than any other, John the Baptist,
15 who stands before our great almighty God,
I turn to fix my heart and eyes on you,
hoping, since I must glorify your daughter,
18 that you will fill my mind now with your grace
and seek more grace as well from that sweet house
that rules in Trinity as One and Three,
21 in heaven and on earth, with loving counsel,
so that, by grace divine infused in me,
I'll have the power and wit, albeit small,
24 to deck in glory one who is your daughter.
In your grace, make me, Holy Trinity,
worthy to demonstrate through fairest verse
27 the glory of your realm so flourishing.
[f. 1v] Almighty Jove, o deity supreme,
may your almighty diadem bring aid
30 to my defenceless vessel shipwrecked here,
that I might here provide an image clear
of something strictly asked of me this night
33 by one whom I would willingly obey.
As I lay sleeping, just before the dawn,
a woman came to me within a vision,
36 her aspect pleasing, chaste and decorous,
a fierce lion stood beside her, on her right,

with all its fur, and with its right paw raised
 39 it held erect a mighty gonfalon
 which had a field all of the whitest silk
 and in the middle a vermillion cross;
 42 and on her left hand side there could be seen
 a Grecian Hercules, erect and proud,
 whose bearing showed such fearlessness that I
 45 could scarcely find the words to here describe it.
 More fleet and agile even than a leopard
 he seemed to be, and with an angry brow,
 48 and in his hand he held a noble banner
 in which there could be seen, in fine vermillion,
 set in a field more white than any swan,
 51 a splendid lily, fair and in full bloom.
 Towards the woman each of them did seem
 benign and humble, even reverent,
 54 and quite without malign intent at all.
 [f. 2r] This noble lady, fair and beautiful,
 glowed in the very radiance of her limbs
 57 as did the very whiteness of her raiment;
 and brighter even than the morning star
 before the day, when brightest it does shine,
 60 the eyes of this fair lady spread their light.
 In the same way that sparks fly in a circle
 when burning logs are struck repeatedly
 63 so that the world shines brightly with the sparks,
 so did it seem that rubies and balasses
 were lit within by living flames of fire
 66 and framed her with their splendour all around.
 At first, just like a bird caught in a net,
 or like an otter, caught on baited hook,
 69 I didn't know just what to do or think.
 I gazed at her in fearful awe and stood
 in silence, as an honest person does,
 72 quite filled with love, and doubt, and even thirst,
 and murmured to myself, "What can this be?,"
 and wondered at that woman, who was dressed
 75 in no more than a veil, all white and shining,
 and woven from a thread so very fine
 that it concealed her body just as lightly
 78 as the bright air around us hides the sky.
 Just as a thief will stop and hold his breath
 hearing a noise from those he's come to rob,
 81 not panicking in any way at all,
 but squeezing out of sight into a corner
 [f. 2v] in trembling fear – and it is right that one
 84 who earns his living thus should rue his sin –
 so I stood still, and did not drop my eyes
 from this imagined form, from whom there shone
 87 the light of many beauties in her midst.

My heart wanted to speak, but remained mute,
 for fear of some aggression from those two
 90 who stood beside the lady on each side.
 And seeing this, the lady cried aloud
 and with a kindly gesture said to me,
 93 "I'm not Medusa who turns men to stones.
 So come, my friend, and set your fear aside."
 And then she called me by my very name
 96 and said, "I want to grant you what you wish."
 And when I heard her uttering my name
 I summoned up my courage and replied,
 99 "You know my name, but I do not know yours.
 Tell me, I pray, if you are Cythera
 or else one of the sisters of Parnassus,
 102 or mortal spirit or goddess divine,
 for to my eyes you are the fairest vessel
 that ever was in heaven or on earth
 105 and your great beauty seems exceptional.
 Free me from torment now by telling me
 your name, if it's allowed, and who you are
 108 and who these are who keep you company,
 because, I swear to you upon my faith
 I'm trembling now in every limb for fear
 111 [f. 3r] of them, and you as well; and in my breast
 my heart is pounding, and my eyes well up
 in fright, such that I now, sweet goddess, pray
 114 that you'll lift this cruel terror from my heart.
 And if you free me from this deadly weight
 you'll see me hasten to adore you there
 117 and join my hands in reverence to you
 because I feel my heart already bows
 to worship you and venerate you as
 120 a being supreme, unique and truly worthy."
 Then, in the tongue of angels she replied
 and said to me, "Be not afraid, fear not
 123 for your safe passage shelters in my name,
 which I intend to tell you in good time,
 and these two here with me, whom you so fear,
 126 you'll yet embrace with pleasure and delight.
 So listen closely now to what I say
 and banish all the woe that fills your heart
 129 and shine a light where now your eyes don't see.
 The universal world gave birth to three
 fair daughters: Asia, Africa, Europa;
 132 and of these three, Europa was the sun
 when compared to the others, and from her
 came I, and so of her alone I speak,
 135 for from her came, so beautifully adorned,
 this worthy stock that now I must relate.
 Italia was Europa's fairest child,

138 who seems to have been made by God's own hand
 [f. 3v] and there is no one like her in the world.
 When she was born, my mother looked just like
 141 the morning star, her beauty *sine equalia*.
 They called her Tuscany, and so she flourished
 and in good judgement and experience
 144 she has no equal in this mortal world.
 I am her daughter, called Florentia,
 Florentia the fair, and this is my
 147 *marzocco*. Come, don't be afraid of him!
 And this one here, you see, I'm touching him,
 he is the one, I want you now to know,
 150 who used his cudgel to subdue all pride.
 And just so that my city lives in peace,
 he's been entrusted with the locks and seals
 153 of all my statutes, orders and decrees.
 And so that all your senses take their fill
 of glory, and so you can recognize
 156 these symbols of the people and the commune,
 look at the righteous banner that preserves
 the glory of the men who hold it high,
 159 and those who let it fall, like Rome or Greece,
 collapse in ruin. This protects us better
 than swords have ever brought protection to
 162 the states of ancient and of modern times."
 And when I saw these decorated symbols,
 I dropped at once and knelt upon the ground
 165 before that lady of the noble limbs.
 I knelt devoutly and I kissed her feet
 [f. 4r] and then I turned and with my heart serene
 168 I hugged and kissed the fearful lion, that then
 took me and wrapped me tight within his arms
 and licked me head to toe, then let me go.
 171 And then I turned around and looked at him
 whose strength subdued so many of the wicked,
 and kissed him with affection on the face
 174 in such a way that words cannot describe.
 And lovingly he wound his arms around
 my neck, and bowed his head and kissed me then
 177 upon my brow, and left me quite undone.
 And then, more lovingly than I can say
 my lady of the laws more just and holy
 180 than words can ever say turned round to me,
 and bared her breast, and said, "Read this and see
 183 the words that form a garland round my heart,
 and this is where he who would rule must rule."
 I gazed on it, with such a sweetness filled,
 as there I saw her heart, encircled round
 186 with golden letters on the bluest ground.
 And then she said, "In these my glory lies

and in the letters L and I and B
 189 and E and R and T and A and S.”
 And when I'd read the letters I saw there,
 a wave of love flowed over me, so great
 192 it almost swept my soul up from my body.
 The Lady reached and took me by the hand
 and drew me up to stand in her bright rays
 195 and made me see and feel them from close by.
 [f. 4v] At once I bowed my head in reverence,
 with hands together, gently and in peace.
 198 Each ray of light I kissed a thousand times
 no less devoutly than a pious Christian
 will go before the Cross on Holy Friday
 201 with words and gestures of humility.
 Then I embraced the Lady with my hands,
 with all the joy and reverence that a son
 204 would use to greet his father in far lands.
 I said, “Dearest Florentia, what's this grace
 that you would grant to one who is your servant?”
 207 And then, her head still bowed, she spoke and said
 to me, “It is a great love that I bear
 towards you, famous soul, and now I wish
 210 to make you him who sings my glory's praise.
 I tell you this: the man who glories me
 and makes me ride in triumph on the justice
 213 upon which God in heav'n himself resides,
 should make me known throughout the whole wide world,
 proclaim my reputation and my glory,
 216 and sing my triumphs, since my youngest days.
 I want him to compose a worthy history,
 for I will make the man who does me this
 219 eternally remembered in his fame.
 I've chosen you, and not without good cause,
 to be the poet of my noble glory
 222 and of him who sits high in your affection.
 Nor do I wish that this should seem or be
 too great a load. Accept my invitation
 225 [f. 5r] for it will set you well upon your way.
 We always ought to try to follow good
 and flee from ill, since when we come before
 228 great Jove, good is rewarded, evil punished,
 and proof of this is there to see each day.
 Wherefore, my son, assume this enterprise
 231 for this is grace that rains on you from heaven,
 and never will your glory suffer harm,
 but when you die, your fame will make you live
 234 so all expense of effort is worthwhile.
 Do not refuse, and do not be reluctant
 to decorate my brow with your sweet words
 237 of myrtle and of laurel and of olive.”

And when she'd finished speaking, then I knelt,
 before her, just as Moses on the mount
 240 knelt down to God as he received the laws.
 I said to her, "I see well how you love me
 and want to make me pluck the highest fruit,
 243 even though I can't reach the lowest branch.
 I wish I were more worthy, so that I
 could serve you, but instead I must conclude
 246 that all my powers would not be enough.
 I am a man of rude and simple wit,
 broken, battered, wretched and so vile
 249 that it has been stripped bare of every sweetness.
 The work you ask would need a masterly
 and learned spirit, one that is alert,
 252 with honeyed tongue, and with an expert style.
 [f. 5v] I've none of these, and it's with much regret
 that I cannot complete what you request,
 255 because in soul and body I'm oppressed.
 I am so poor and hungry that I could
 not find even a leaf, and let alone
 258 such fruit to savour in abundance here.
 And in my want I'm filled with pain and grief
 that what I'd have to say on such a theme
 261 would lack the salt of wit that is required.
 My Lady, he who wished to serve you well
 would need a soul more blithe than I could have
 264 unless I were to be reborn anew."
 And at my words she turned to me and said,
 "Although a pauper finds that his safe haven
 267 from cruel chance is snatched away from him,
 he'll never find that virtue's path is closed,
 not even for a moment, and I see
 270 that that is where your heart's directed now.
 And for this reason, I intend that you
 should be the one who give my people news
 273 of this, and think no more of what you lack.
 Instead, direct your heart and soul to this:
 that you will be rewarded from on high,
 276 and soon you'll see the one sent here by God.
 Your intellect will be infused with light
 by grace of God and of the Holy Spirit,
 279 for God is gracious to all those who ask.
 Peace and not war, and happiness not tears
 [f. 6r] will be your soul's reward, and it will live
 282 in glory evermore throughout the world.
 This work will be your standard, flying high
 to bring you fame and light your way with honour
 285 as you climb up where other seldom dare.
 You'll follow on a path that brings you praise,
 one little followed by your fellow men,

288 because they seek their ruin in ease and feathers.
 For those who live their lives in worldly pleasure
 the soul's departure leaves a stinking corpse
 291 and nothing else remains when they are gone.
 Therefore, my son, be bold and take your pen
 and undertake this worthy task that will
 294 set you apart from the malodorous throng,
 and such will be the glory so supreme
 it brings to your dear person, sweet my son,
 297 that it will not diminish over time.
 Illustrious soul, I pray, do as I ask,
 as every son must do his mother's bidding."
 300 And here she finished speaking, and I turned
 to her with my eyes lowered reverently
 as does befit a servant to his lord,
 303 who chooses humble words when he must speak,
 and I began to answer her like this:
 "May the most blessed Muses give me grace
 306 to bring your glory to its fullest flower.
 I'll answer you no more with doubts and cavils
 but try instead to do all you request
 309 [f. 6v] with every ounce of strength at my command.
 Tell me, most noble Lady of Florentia,
 what you require, and I give you my word,
 312 not adding or subtracting yet one jot,
 I'll carry out your orders to the letter,
 with all the strength my senses can assemble.
 315 and I will carry out your every wish.
 What you request I'll take as my command.
 My heart, most strong and constant, is combined
 318 with speed way faster than the freshest winds,
 to guide me as I carry out your wishes.
 So now, from this time forth, rejoice in this:
 321 that nought but death can turn me from this task.
 Just as a stamp will leave its print in wax
 so I will make a record of your words,
 324 and reap true harvest of the seeds you sow;
 for I, your faithful servant, have resolved
 with all my heart to do what you command
 327 no less than if my promise were to Jove.
 The orders you have given me will be
 fulfilled in every way, I promise you,
 330 whatever time of day or night you ask."
 And she replied to me, "It gives me joy
 to see my wishes put into effect,
 333 and that you have resolved to serve me well.
 And on my faith, I give my solemn promise
 that you will find great pleasure in retelling
 336 the words that I am now about to say.
 [f. 7r] From start to end I'll show you how I've had

a multitude of citizens, of great
 339 learning and of famous reputation,
 who've been beside me, like divine protectors,
 to help me triumph and to make me great,
 342 always helping me extend my borders.
 My ample glories are to be admired,
 so great and many that no length of time
 345 would be enough to make half of them known.
 In all fields of achievement I've found glory
 and every earthly honour to be had,
 348 thanks to the grace that's rained on me from God.
 In war I've had a thousand victories
 and more, bringing me wealth and fame besides,
 351 to raise the good and punish those who err;
 my citizens have never left me weak,
 but in their mercy they've defended me
 354 always, with gold, with wisdom or with arms.
 How many citizens of rank and power
 I've had, who have, by means of their great prudence,
 357 given our foes good cause to think again;
 who've much enlarged the compass of my state
 and overthrown and slain many a tyrant
 360 who seizing what was mine lost all he had.
 The one who thought he could usurp me suffered
 enormous loss; and now, give praise to God
 363 and to our glorious patron John the Baptist
 who have defended me from every ill,
 [f. 7v] and all oppression and from every woe,
 366 and raised me to the highest and happiest state.
 And as the gods and fates have now disposed,
 I've risen right up to the highest rank
 369 to be a leading state in Italy.
 When men set out to cross a sea or river,
 if you then see them coming back to port
 372 it's by the grace of God and happens rarely.
 If I wished to relate in all its detail
 the entire story of my glorious past,
 375 no book would be sufficient to contain it;
 and were someone to try to make a list
 of names and glories of my citizens,
 378 he'd find none with the wit to do it all.
 Their flesh is gone and yet their glory lives
 and in God's army they will always fight,
 381 for fame on earth and with the saints in heaven.
 And many great and celebrated men
 I've had who in their sanctity and rule,
 384 or by their coat of arms or by their name,
 or by their learning or their genius,
 or by their charity or other virtue
 387 have raise their souls to glory and great worth.

There's nowhere now or ever in the world
 could boast of virtue to such an extent
 390 that I could not find more to boast about.
 And in my day I've had thousands of lovers
 who've parted with their gold, even their lives,
 393 to give me glory and to dry my tears.
 [f. 8r] No Lady in the world is half as welcome
 as me, or revels in half of my glory
 396 or half the endless and illustrious praise.
 My citizens have been both saints and kings,
 and rulers of great provinces and realms,
 399 and captained armies and been infantry.
 My citizens have been men of great wit.
 My citizens have been men of great wealth
 402 and men distinguished by their charity.
 My citizens have been men of great prowess,
 and of great reputation and great wealth,
 405 and many a poet has worn the laurel crown.
 I've always had a blessed Standard Bearer
 of Justice, whom I've solemnly revered,
 408 and always been devoted to the Church.
 And for the Parte Guelfa I maintain
 a central seat, because in every age
 411 it's done me honour with magnificence.
 In every field I've mentioned I have had
 so great a multitude of citizens
 414 renowned and glorious in all their goodness
 that if one were to try to make a list
 and glorify their names with their good work
 417 then it would take a goodly pile of paper.
 But one I'll single out of all these fields,
 because I do not wish to pass so lightly
 420 over such virtue, without naming names.²
 A thousand years or even more have passed
 [f. 8v] since the death of that glorious saint who looks
 423 today as if he just died yesterday,
 San Zanobi Girolami, who loved
 with great devotion our Lord Jesus Christ,

² The source for these illustrious Florentines is probably Filippo Villani, *Vite d'uomini illustri*. Zanobi Girolami (San Zanobi, died between 417 and 429) was the first bishop of Florence, appointed by St Ambrose; Esau de' Buondelmonti (c. 1345–1403), a military adventurer became the effective ruler of Cephalonia in 1381 on the death of Leonardo I, who had been married to Esau's sister: see Hans Joachim Kissling, "Buondelmonti, Esau," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 15 (1972), on-line; Filippo Buondelmonte degli Scolari (called Pippo Spano, 1369–1426), *condottiero* and probably patron of the arts in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg; Niccolò Acciaiuoli (1310–65), merchant in Naples and subsequently great seneschal of the Kingdoms of Sicily and Jerusalem and founder of the Carthusian monastery of Galluzzo: see E. G. Léonard, "Acciaiuoli, Niccolò," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 1 (1960), on-line; Niccolò Alberti (died 1377), knight and held various public offices and gave generously to the church and to the poor: see Armando Sapori, "Alberti, Niccolò," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 1 (1960), on-line; Dino del Mugello, see n. 3 above; Dino del Mugello (Dino Rossoni) taught law in Bologna, and was commissioned to write legal commentaries by Boniface VIII;

426 and wore the mantle of our bishopric.
 Esaù Buondelmonti, called *Despotes*,
 was great and sovereign king of Cephalonia,
 429 where people judged him to be more than worthy.
 What shall I say of the great Pippo Spano,
 the mighty captain Filippo Scolari,
 432 who held the sceptre in his very hand
 and governed both the treasury and armies,
 and everyone in Hungary came together
 435 to pay him homage with a single heart?
 What shall I say of the great Acciaiuoli
 who held great power and as seneschal
 438 he governed Naples fairly and with much
 authority and with great reputation?
 He built the first Carthusian monastery
 441 in Italy, and won his place in heaven.
 What shall I say of one so merciful
 that he gave all his money to the poor
 444 for infamy on earth but joy heaven?
 And this was Niccolao degli Alberti,
 who fought for Christ's Church Militant on earth
 447 and distributed alms in many thousands:
 forty thousand florins to the Commune,
 and then the same again to honest virgins
 450 and to the poor, and these sums were the cord
 [f. 9r] that drew him up to sainthood in the stars
 where now he stands rejoicing before God
 453 and tastes the sweetest fruits of paradise.
 What style should I adopt to write about
 those worthy men whose knowledge of the law
 456 included everything from A to Z,
 like Dino del Mugello, whose wise gloss
 on many of the texts of the *Pandectæ*
 459 brought great fame to himself and to his heirs?
 What shall I say of him whom heaven granted
 command of all the seven fields of learning,
 462 and gave him fame in all, from one to seven.
 He had no equal in theology,
 his name was Dante degli Aldighieri
 465 who won the laurel crown for poetry.
 What shall I say of the enormous wealth
 that Messer Vieri de' Cerchi amassed,
 468 far greater than I could begin to say?
 Its excess and abundance were such that
 he left six hundred thousand golden florins,
 471 or, in gold marks, the equal of ten thousand.
 All of these men were masters in their fields
 and by their fame they found a place in heaven
 474 and spread their glory over all my lands.
 And many, many more I could describe

but, for the present, let these names suffice
 477 to set me on the path I wish to follow.
 I have, throughout the years, often changed leader
 and sometimes I've fared well and sometimes better,
 480 [f. 9v] and in the end the good have always triumphed.
 But on the day when God gazed down on me,
 that was the blessed day the saw the birth
 483 of him who now stands old in years and wisdom,
 and who for his great fame will never die:
 his name is Cosimo de' Medici,
 486 and he would err who did not love him well.
 With his ascendance, all my reputation
 was duplicated twice a hundredfold,
 489 because God loves him far above all others.
 And if I've ever limped on twisted limbs,
 they're straightened now and mended by his hand,
 492 exalting me and confounding my foes.
 Just as the limbs of Christ Jesus were nailed
 onto the holy cross by Jews who acted
 495 in rage and envy, not for any crime,
 so in fourteen thirty-three it happened
 that envy here on earth could bring about
 498 the kind of havoc the gods wreak in heaven.
 God remedied the treachery of men,
 but Cosimo was banished from my house
 501 with rabid rage, with perfidy, and pride.
 But just as Jesus Christ on the third day
 in body and in soul rose from the dead
 504 in glory and ascended into heaven,
 so by the order of the heav'nly court
 my people, in their generous good grace,
 507 did summon Cosimo to come back home.
 [f. 10r] Cosmo returned, his triumph like that which
 the Emperor Augustus had in Rome.
 510 Now you can see how God rewards the just.
 And just as God avenged himself upon
 the Jewish dogs by means of other hands
 513 and scattered them abroad, devouring them,
 so in like manner, those who soiled their hands
 to damage Cosimo were punished well
 516 and scattered far and wide like infidels.
 Some were expelled and some were put to death,
 and some were sent to serve their time in gaol,
 519 and some were given harsh admonishment.
 And woe to those who condoned this excess,
 within the year they paid the capital
 522 along with fees and interest on this fraud.
 And with this fire of hate and ill put out,
 his next task was political reform
 525 and government in wisdom and in peace.

Now you can see what glory Jove was pleased
 to shower down on him in great abundance,
 528 making him more effective than his peers,
 for one year on from his return from exile
 he was to bear the gonfalon of Justice:
 531 so heaven set him on the path to glory.
 No sooner had he been recalled back home
 than my soil too began to bloom again,
 534 to his advantage and in gratitude.
 Not even with a thousand tongues could I
 [f. 10v] relate, nor with a thousand ears could you
 537 perceive, nor could we grasp with human minds
 how sadly grieved the young and old, the great
 and small were at the time he was expelled;
 540 on his return, it seemed, all sought him out.
 Some venerated him with deeds, and some
 with gestures; each man, he could, made haste
 543 to honour him with due reverence and joy.
 His return marked the moment and the hour
 when Heav'n determined that I should be free,
 546 thanks to this man, of all my suffering.
 Just as a leaf cannot drop from a tree
 unless God wills it, so it is in Florence
 549 that nothing happens except by his will.
 Cosimo is so learned and so wise
 and Heaven has endowed him with such grace
 552 that none would ever challenge his opinion.
 Now savour what I say and mark it well:
 that Jove with his own hand has placed this man
 555 in charge, and set strong axles in his wheels.
 Therefore, my son, be sure to understand
 there never was nor will be glory such
 558 as this: such glory will be first and last.
 His dowry of the virtues he commands;
 the vices he's combusted or submerged;
 561 in prudence he exceeds all other men.
 He's strong and temperate and also just,
 with faith and charity and hope in God
 564 [f. 11r] and always keen to do all kinds of good.
 He is humane, and kind and faithful,
 and seamlessly his will becomes effect
 567 as he performs all mercy's seven acts.
 Discord and rancour he extinguishes
 and does so much with actions and with words
 570 that where he roots out ill, concord is born.
 And if you were to search the whole wide world
 you'd never find a man so well renowned
 573 among all the inhabitants on earth.
 Cosimo is so worthy and so revered
 that from the east right over to the west

576 not one just man exists but loves him well
 and nobody would hesitate to serve him.
 And likewise from the south right to the north
 579 all men compete to do him reverence.
 There's nothing in this glory that's arcane,
 but rather it is clear for all to see
 582 by land, by mountain and by coastal shore.
 His divine birth's the source of all these gifts,
 and there is not an empire, realm or state
 585 that does not willingly grant what he asks.
 However great or small the thing he seeks,
 they grant to him, then they give him thanks.
 588 Now look at just how bright his glory shines!
 His grace is such in matters of the spirit
 that popes and cardinals all vie to please,
 591 each wishing thus to satisfy his will.
 [f. 11v] Don't think that my description's overdone
 because my words are carefully weighed and don't
 594 describe even a half of his great fame.
 But, unless death or worse beset me now,
 I will endeavour yet to sing his praise,
 597 although my strength can scarce bear such a weight.
 Whenever he was asked, he never could,
 or would, refuse to do what was entreated,
 600 instead was glad to grant the favour sought;
 He's always been exceptionally willing,
 wanting to please in every way he can,
 603 such as I scarce could tell in verse or prose.
 But any man who's ever asked him knows,
 and I don't think there's any lord alive
 606 who hasn't had experience of this,
 and I do not believe that anyone
 in all the whole wide world was ever turned
 609 away by this great and delightful man.
 Nor does one have to overdo the pleas,
 for he knows what you want before you speak,
 612 he makes it happen, and this is the truth.
 Just think upon his glory, each of you!
 Such fame wells constantly within this man
 615 that it spreads through the heav'ns to every star.
 And I would say, if I were to find fault
 with Nature, that she seriously erred
 618 in making Cosimo a mortal man,
 because a noble creature such as he,
 [f. 12r] so full of virtue, grace and worthy fame,
 621 ought to have purest immortality.
 Oh, how my banner then would fly triumphant
 and glorious, until the final day
 624 brings judgement to the wicked and the good.
 But leaving wishes, let me turn to facts.

And first I say that God's done everything
 627 with zeal and justice, right throughout the world,
 and when Cosimo comes to Paradise
 he'll work to glorify me no less there
 630 than here on earth, both in the past and now;
 and that he'll be my advocate with Jove,
 for in all things, as we come close to God
 633 and are more blessed, we can do all the more.
 And for this reason I do surely know
 that I will ride in highest triumph yet,
 636 and as his will decrees, so will I ride.
 And if my words or gestures could but speak
 I'd show how much I feel and taste his glory,
 639 I'd make the rocks break open with his sweetness.
 But I cannot express what lies within
 and bring together thought, word and desire,
 642 and I don't know from whence this failure comes.
 As often happens when we speak of God
 of whose whole we can represent but little,
 645 —wise theologians find this cause for grief —
 with just my hoarse and torpid intellect
 I'll relate what I can, not what I think,
 648 [f. 12v] and what I say is like the faintest organ
 compared to what I understand of him.
 But since this is no fight unto the death,
 651 I call surrender and lay down my arms,
 cut only to the bone and not the marrow;
 I still must glean much wisdom here, for which
 654 I'd need a pen that's far less coarse than mine.
 And all the fame and glory here assembled
 of my past citizens is now eclipsed
 657 by Cosimo's, that shines so strong and bright.
 Although I told you all the ancient glories
 of all my worthy citizens, new fame
 660 now soars above them all in every way.
 And let this be the proof that this is true,
 and piece by piece I'll set it out for you,
 663 a subject useful and delightful too,
 and fit to fill with glory many pages.
 And to begin I will describe his wealth,
 666 more than the Cerchi's riches four times over.
 More than two hundred jewels, each worth a thousand
 ducats belong to this one wealthy man,
 669 and that's a fact that's known to everyone.
 He must have many more that no one knows
 their full extent, because he is a well
 672 into which every other river flows.
 He has the same and more in Monte bonds,
 a fortune if converted into cash,
 675 and power to call in debts with just one word.

[f. 13r] The number of his farms is infinite
 and year by year they bring him in a fortune,
 678 and all of them right royally equipped.
 His gold and silver is all finely wrought,
 but I won't say how much, in case I'm wrong,
 681 but it would build a choir in San Giovanni.
 And if he wanted, he could put together
 in just a hundred days every last piece
 684 of money ever coined in Christendom
 by means of all the business that he does
 scattered here and yon throughout the world,
 687 and this is common knowledge everywhere.
 I'd further add that this fortunate man
 has such enormous wealth scattered around
 690 it seems there is no bottom to his wealth.
 Now let us move along to other parts;
 and if one were to look for someone who
 693 matched all his knowledge in so many arts,
 it would be an exceedingly long search,
 because as theologian or as poet,
 696 he'd always set himself apart somehow.
 But if someone were found who was his match
 in erudition, I know that the man
 699 to whom the God of Grace has granted mercy
 would yet surpass him, so there's none can match
 and nothing to correct in word or deed,
 702 nor does he need another to bear witness.
 What shall I say of him who has provided
 [f. 13v] so many commentaries on laws and texts
 705 and in both laws can sort the sheep from goats?³
 I'll say he never rose above a trot,
 while Cosimo compared to him speeds on
 708 and never trips and stumbles with his load.
 He's shed light on a thousand moot and complex
 points, and on grey areas of the law,
 711 and no 'but' ever passed anyone's lips.
 Now I must talk about his charity
 and here I'm more than willing to dig deep
 714 because his goodness all derives from this.
 I think he's spent a fortune and much more
 in golden florins for the love of God,
 717 to seal his place in Heaven and flee Hell.
 Let's come to what he's fostered through these acts
 of piety: his like has never lived
 720 on earth, as all men know as well as me.
 The Seneschal⁴ donated the Certosa,
 but Cosimo has built, here and elsewhere,
 723 great churches that are infinite in number.

³ Probably Dino di Mugello; see also v. 457.

⁴ Niccola Acciaiuoli, cf. v. 439.

All kinds of men, warlike and bellicose,
 obey him wheresoever he may be,
 726 for those who serve him gain no small reward.
 The famous knight⁵ had under his command
 enormous numbers of Hungarian troops,
 729 but many more are under the control
 of Cosimo, who raising just one hand,
 has at his bidding all the men at arms
 732 [f. 14r] on any day and anywhere in Europe.
 The time has come to talk about his power
 and here I say that every Christian realm
 735 desires to do whatever pleases him.
 While Buondelmonti governed Cephalonia,⁶
 Cosmo can draw on her and more besides,
 738 no less than can the greatest of his fellows.
 Likewise he seems a candidate for sainthood,
 for to all those whom God loves he's a saint
 741 and what he gives them can't be taken from them.
 That he is loved by God, and just how much,
 this we can see through all his pious works
 744 and for this reason God exalts him so.
 He's equal to the saints, no less, no more,
 but in this earthly world in every test
 747 of virtue he has far surpassed all others.
 The heavens, moved to joy, did all bow down
 when Cosimo was born, to glorify him,
 750 and they will not retreat from what's ordained.
 For proof it's true, just look at what I say,
 for evidence there is that can be seen
 753 that God's disposed all things to honour him,
 and my most noble Florence above all,
 in rule, in art, and in intelligence,
 756 and in the triumph of magnificence,
 she's made herself a realm that flourishes
 with every virtue and field of endeavour
 759 in the life of Cosimo great and worthy.
 Now I will make a list of all the gifts
 [f. 14v] God's given me since Cosimo was born
 762 and how much greater is my fame and glory.
 My city, with its plain and hills and waters,
 increased its triumph twofold on the birth
 765 of the great Cosimo, as Jove so willed.
 with the result that my inhabitants
 now living here must be far more content
 768 than those who went before and rightly so.
 In this time Latin and all erudition,
 have reached and now maintain a height that's more
 771 sublime than any time since Tullius.

⁵ Filippo Scolari, called Pippo Spano, cf. vv. 430–31.

⁶ Esau de' Buondelmonti, cf. 427–8.

I've had, in my Florentia, from Arezzo
 Carlo, and the great Leonardo Bruni,
 774 who were the fertile fount of eloquence.
 Not since the time of Livy have there been
 such learned men in Greek, Hebrew and Latin,
 777 and they have none like them to be their peers.
 And in this age we set out on the path
 of sailing the high seas in giant galleys
 780 to my dominion's honour and its gain.
 Great masters of perspective in this age
 have worked in painting and intarsia, such
 783 that what is not they make to seem quite real.
 Were Giotto and great Cimabue here,
 along with the great carpenters of old,
 786 they wouldn't pass now as apprentices.
 Florence has masters of embroidery
 and goldsmiths of such genius and skill
 789 [f. 15r] that one could never seek or want for more.
 Such is their skill in this and such their art
 that with needle and hammer they can make
 792 flax that looks just like silk, and wood like gold.
 And sculpture's at the summit of these arts,
 such that since Rome was founded there has not
 795 been carving more sublime and beautiful.
 And right throughout the world it is renowned
 – it's something that is talked about abroad –
 798 carving that's perfect from head down to toe.
 And then there was the master architect
 who had skill in that art in greater measure
 801 than any man but him has ever had.
 Without supporting scaffolding he closed
 the dome that soared to alpine heights above
 804 my fair church of St Mary of the Flower.
 Although his body died, the fame lives on
 of that Filippo di Ser Brunelleschi
 807 and will survive right up to Judgement Day.
 Now hear and savour what I tell you next
 to show you how I constantly renew
 810 the glory of my Florence in this age.
 For every man, a hundred, and indeed
 more lengths of silken fabric have been woven,
 813 with quality and art more than before.
 There they have made and make many brocades
 and gold- and silver-woven satin damask,
 816 rich, precious, admirable and ornate.
 [f. 15v] And in my Florence the whole art of spun
 and beaten gold and silver has attained
 819 the highest level of accomplishment,
 and all of Italy and everywhere
 comes here to buy examples of these arts,

822 to the great profit of our Floral city.
 And even though these arts, which were quite new-
 established in our time, were once unknown,
 825 now they are practised to perfection's heights.
 And here these arts have reached a perfect state
 that is not matched in any other place,
 828 founded on genius and intellect.
 None could relate the beauty of my Florence
 unless he were to see her face to face,
 831 and see how great and well adorned she is.
 And you who want to see Heaven on earth,
 look at the houses, look at the great gardens
 834 filled with laughter mingled with sweet song.
 They look like choirs with rows of seraphim,
 prepared with such a host of decorations,
 837 the dwellings of the great and of the small.
 And in the countryside a multitude
 of palaces, all fortified like castles,
 840 worthy, adorned and much to be admired,
 all of them built in this our present age,
 according to the worthy and sublime
 843 construction and design of ancient Rome.
 Let no one think that these most sovereign dwellings
 are less than worthy; rather, they are full
 846 [f. 16r] of a great wealth of human ornament:
 of rich and precious furnishings, of gold
 and silver, and of tapestry and lawn,
 849 such that it all rejoices with delight
 – imagine this, for all of it is true! –
 and horses, servants, chambermaids, and slaves
 852 are always found there in endless supply.
 Most of the citizens are not so rich
 in property, investments, and in cash,
 855 and everyone lives sweetly in his station.
 And many a merchant there has always been,
 and once there were, around Mercato Nuovo,
 858 forty of them, with open shops, and forty
 more who moved among them, in this gold mine.
 And all these things have happened in my time
 861 and in my city where all things do flourish.
 And in this time, the statutes were composed
 to regulate the fund for virgins' dowries
 864 so that they might be brides when the time came.
 Listen closely to what I have to say,
 since I want this part clearly understood
 867 and known to every man throughout the world.
 The pomp of men's apparel has become
 so grand and so excessive, that the sin
 870 of those who are most learned is the greatest.
 Scarlet from the Levant and from Provence,

and crimson are as commonplace as bread
 873 that everybody eats, so anyone
 [f. 16v] from greatest to the middling to the least
 who didn't dress in scarlet would not be
 876 regarded as an honest Christian man.
 My people spend an endless stream of money
 each year on buying clothes that they will wear
 879 and hose in Lucca scarlet of fine wool,
 and doublets that, most wondrous to relate,
 are often made of fine silver brocade.
 882 And some prefer to dress themselves in crimson,
 some high-pile, some low-pile, and some in velvet,
 in satin and in damasks of all colours,
 885 and everybody wears a scarlet cloak.
 The great magnificence and the great honour
 of all my foremost citizens' appearance
 888 was never greater than it is right now.
 In this they clearly show they are divine
 and that they're worthy to accompany
 891 the citizens of ancient Greece and Rome.
 No clothes are ever lined with anything
 except the backs of miniver or sable,
 894 of marten or of lynx or quadrumane
 the belly-fur of civet-cat and ermine,
 and often times we find these linings in
 897 the finest velvets, satins and damasks.
 Ribbons and trains and borders and such jags
 are used by everyone without restraint,
 900 and hoods and capes always of richest red.
 Women's adornment is much sweeter yet,
 for most of them wear brocade underskirts
 903 [f. 17r] and cover them with silver, gold, and pearls,
 and such is the sublime magnificence
 of adornment for women young and old
 906 that I can think of nothing that compares.
 Beautiful women are abundant here,
 richly bedecked in clothes and pearls and jewels,
 909 in gold and silver, precious stones and rings,
 embroidery and veils studded with jewels,
 with pearls and ribbons and great head-pieces,
 912 with chains about the necks of new-wed brides,
 brooches and clasps and pins and necklaces,
 cloaks and brocades both underneath and over,
 915 a thousand kinds of girdles at their waists.
 My ladies of Florentia cover all
 the ground around with their extended trains
 918 that trail along with great magnificence.
 Parisian horns and headdresses they wear
 in such a way that when they're all dressed up
 921 they seem, in their appearance, to be queens,

so that for them, in these most happy days,
 many a ball and joust has been arranged,
 924 and weddings and festivities most solemn.
 Flower of my people, here your praise is shown
 in this our present time, and with great joy
 927 and all your glories are here magnified.
 In Florence there is not one street or road
 where there has not been tilting day and night
 930 and where there have not been both jousts and balls.
 [f. 17v] Now hear and savour what I have to say
 about great churches and fair oratories
 933 that in rich decoration have no peer.
 With altar frontals, copes, silver and gold,
 with holy relics and great ornament
 936 these churches are adorned, inside and out.
 And in this time they built Santa Maria
 del Fior from her foundations, and she has
 939 no peer among the ancients and the moderns.
 And nowhere in the world is any church
 of God served better or with greater honour,
 942 with singing and with all heartfelt devotion,
 than we have seen done here, in my opinion,
 and nowadays it's done far more than ever,
 945 in you, Florentia, full of joyful splendour.
 Numerous hospitals and institutions
 are found in Florence, where with charity
 948 the poor receive relief from pain and woe.
 They're rich and great in number, so they can
 can provide assistance, meeting all the needs
 951 of anyone who falls on troubled times.
 And in these times, there's been, and we have seen,
 in every citizen devout desire
 954 to worship God and go beyond our dreams
 and celebrate the grand representation
ad laudem Dei of the great Baptist Martyr
 957 *ad gloriam mundi* way beyond compare,
 because he works in heaven without ceasing
 [f. 18r] to bring us grace sublime from sweetest Mary,
 960 from God almighty and all in their sight,
 and by that grace Florence defends herself
 from all war's evil, and extends her fame,
 963 in this most splendid and delightful age.
 Throughout my city, Guelf and flourishing,
 the joy and glory of this age is seen,
 966 that we can safely say will never fail.
 And in this age my people have been many
 and mighty, and I've had wise citizens
 969 aplenty who with courage and with force
 and common sense have brought under control
 the wickedness of all the enemies

972 of my vermillion lily set in gold.
 My citizens were never so adorned
 as they are now with glory and with power
 975 nor sublimated with such famous virtue.
 And the magnificent and foremost rule
 of Florence, the unconquerable city,
 978 was never as magnificent as now.
 For never was her glory great and bright
 as it is now and has been in this time,
 981 such as is rarely seen down here on earth.
 And in this time she counts as her possessions
 Cortona and the fortress of Marradi,
 984 Livorno and the fair city of Pisa,
 the *borgo* and surrounding lands of Poppi
 and Borgo San Sepolcro, Monte Carlo,
 987 [f. 18v] and Bagno,⁷ even though they're still at risk.
 And these majestic things of which I speak
 have all come into being since this man came,
 990 whom God sent to the world to raise it up.
 Cosimo's the man, first among men,
 who makes his native city soar on high
 993 and every day adds pinions to its triumph.
 Wherefore with joyful heart and with blithe soul
 should every Florentine, filled with sweet joy,
 996 thank God almighty first, and then this man,
 for Cosimo has been the origin
 of every part of this magnificence
 999 and multiplied each one a thousandfold.
 This man has never acted with deceit
 conducting all his business truthfully,
 1002 more virtuously than great Scipio;
 nor has he once succumbed to idleness
 but always acted with such virtue that
 1005 I can find no one like him, old or new.
 Just as in April, when one flower blooms
 in a green meadow fairer than the rest,
 1008 you cannot turn your eyes away from it,
 in the same way, in truth, I cannot cease
 to sing the praise of this dear citizen
 1011 because of all the sweetness in my heart.
 It is the will of God in full accord
 with all the blessed saints in his great realm
 1014 as one with the eternal Trinity
 [f. 19r] to grant Cosmo the triumph he deserves
 on earth and all happiness that can be had,
 1017 by grace of God, or by our human wits.
 A man would have to have most excellent gifts
 angelic spirit and divine perception

⁷ Bagno di Romagna, now in the province of Forlì-Cesena.

1020 to make his glories known throughout the world,
 for they're so great that nobody would think
 some blessed sage or fine philosopher
 1023 could do them justice in his poetry.
 A sum of ducats almost infinite
 or, better put, a fortune without end
 1026 Cosimo's spent on building in his day,
ad laudem Dei, to glorify the world,
 with joy-filled heart and never slack or weary;
 1029 and just to tell one part I take the load.
 I do not think that heaven yet conceded
 prudence and might and will to any man
 1032 but one, and that one man is Cosimo.
 Therefore I wish to direct all my might
 to tell one part of all the things he built
 1035 in which he's spent a fortune and much more.⁸
 He has erected excellent buildings here
 and several hundred times a thousand florins
 1038 he's spent on churches, chapels and on convents.
 First in Jerusalem, the Sepulchre
 of Christ and Santo Spirito, an inn
 1041 for pilgrims, he made beautiful as jewels.
 In Barletta St Francis now can boast
 [f. 19v] of having the red roundels on field d'or,
 1044 and equally St Anthony of Padua.
 And in the Riviera close to Genoa
 the friars of San Domenico received
 1047 a beautiful addition he commissioned.
 St Mary of the Angels in Assisi
 was covered with the frescoes he commissioned;
 1050 he also did some other things it needed.
 I've also heard in San Domenico

⁸ On Cosimo and Piero's building in Florence, see also Filarete's *Trattato di Architettura*, chapter 25, which was added to the completed 24 chapters in the copy dedicated to Piero de' Medici, MS Magliabechiano XVII. 30; see edition Antonio Averlino detto il Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, 2 vols., ed. Anna Maria Finoli and Liliana Grassi (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1972); and on-line in *La biblioteca delle fonti storico artistiche* (Pisa: Signum / Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 2006), pp. 683–704. Cosimo constructed a hospice for pilgrims in Jerusalem (I have not identified his act of patronage at the Holy Sepulchre); Barletta?; Genova: he restored the San Domenico, on the slopes of Piccapietra, demolished in the 1820s; Assisi: for Santa Maria degli Angeli, the principal Franciscan church of Assisi he provided for an aqueduct for the friars who lived in the huts clustered around the Porziuncola; Pisa: convent of Dominican nuns, the Monastero di San Domenico in Corso Italia 143, Pisa was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1943, while the surviving church is home to the Order of the Knights of Malta; Val Graziosa, 10 km from Pisa: the Carthusian Chapterhouse of Pisa; Nicosia (Calci), near Pisa: the convent (now abandoned) and church of Sant'Agostino; Prato: the church of San Francesco is not outside the walls; no observantist Franciscan or Dominican church has been identified; Volterra: Sant'Agostino of the Augustinian Hermits; Fiesole (San Domenico): the Benedictine Badia still shows clearly the fruit of Cosimo's patronage, now home to the European University; Bosco ai Frati (Florence): San Piero a Sieve (Florence): in 1420 Cosimo bought and rebuilt the Observant Franciscan convent Bosco ai Frati, and in 1430 endowed it with a library; Monte Senario (Vaglia), 19 km north of Florence: site of the first Convent of the Servi di Maria, built in 1234; Petroio (Mugello): Pieve di San Giovanni was the church near the Medici holdings of Trebbio and Cafaggiolo in the Mugello; San Giovanni Valdarno: the Pieve di San Giovanni Battista (?).

1053 in Pisa, for the holy enclosed women,
 he spent another fortune building there.
 Near Pisa, the Certosa and Nicosia,
 for the observant friars outside Prato,
 1056 and in Volterra, at Sant'Agostino,
 at the Badia of Fiesole he built
 with great expense, and for the friars at Bosco
 1059 he built the great and lovely church and convent;
 at Monte Asinario, and the Pieve
 of San Giovanni and San Giovannino,
 1062 in Tuscan churches and in those beyond.
 And here in Florence, my great citizen
 has not withheld the money from his purse
 1065 but built his treasure into Love divine.⁹
 Saint Ursula and the poor reformed women
 know it well, and their voices with their prayers
 1068 for Cosimo have ris'n to God in heaven.
 Already he has built in the triumphant
 church of Santa Croce such great things
 1071 [f. 20r] that fame of them has spread both far and wide.
 Were one to go and seek throughout the world
 God's fairest churches, I know that they'd seem
 1074 ugly if they were then to be compared
 to San Lorenzo, which has every beauty,
 noble and great, worthy and excellent,
 1077 which Cosimo had changed and reconstructed.
 The central nave is ceilinged in fine gold,
 and ultramarine blue, and full of roses
 1080 that glisten like the brightest stars of morning.
 I do not think that such magnificence
 was ever done in churches such as these,
 1083 worthy of admiration and miraculous.
 Truly the starry vault of heaven does
 not shine with light more bright nor more serene
 1086 than these fair things in San Lorenzo do.
 On either side, the nave is filled with great
 stone columns, each made of a single piece
 1089 of soft and gentle stone, *pietra serena*,
 and capitals, all wonderfully carved.
 Roundels of fine dressed stone and windows glazed
 1092 with finest glasswork are there to be seen
 and then on either side are two more aisles
 both vaulted and adorned in splendid style
 1095 with noble and most worthy ornament.
 A mighty altar stands in the main chapel,
 and on one side there stands the sacristy
 1098 and none so beautiful was ever seen

⁹ In Florence: the convent of Sant'Orsola, Benedictine nuns until 1435, then Franciscan nuns; the basilica and chapter of San Lorenzo; the basilica and convent of San Marco, reassigned from the Silvestrines to the Observant Dominicans, and rebuilt largely at Cosimo's expense;

[f. 20v] nor so amazing or so full of joy:
 it seems to dazzle those who gaze on it
 1101 because it seems the sun is there within.
 The inlays there are beautifully done
 with porphyry and glass and diverse marbles
 1104 such that I find nought worthy of compare.
 His grave is in the middle, and it seems
 adorned with so much beauty that I would
 1107 not know where to begin to tell it all.¹⁰
 The cost in florins of the sacristy
 has been already more than eighteen thousand ;
 1110 and any figure otherwise is wrong.
 So just imagine how the church will be,
 that represents a paradise on earth.
 1113 when this great undertaking is all done.
 And from the very top right to the bottom
 he built San Marco and adorned it so
 1116 that my most lofty style can't do it justice.
 And there he built from the foundations up
 chapels, dormitories, gardens, cloisters,
 1119 amazing, beautiful, and great in size.
 My words would not suffice for me to show
 their dignity and beauty, all so great
 1122 that in our day there's nothing can compare.
 He made a library, great and beautiful,
 with all the books in Greek and Latin tongue
 1125 that can be found surviving in the world,
 and twenty thousand florins was the cost.
 [f. 21r] He spent an even larger treasure still
 1128 on lamps, ciboria, and thuribles,
 candlesticks for the choir, cruets and crosses,
 chalices, patens, pluvials and copes,
 1131 and everything in silver and in gold.
 Vestments for mass, for deacons and subdeacons,
 rich friezes and brocaded chasubles,
 1134 altars adorned with panels and with paintings:
 these things he gave, and with a joyous heart,
 to all these pious places I've described,
 1137 to which he grants as much a man can.
 I want my mention just of these few pious
 places, out of them all, to be sufficient:
 1140 they are just but a spark of his great fire.
 And now I must return you with my verse
 to tell you of his earthly building projects
 1143 that are beyond my powers to describe.
 You'll see his glory growing day by day,
 and his magnificence, and his sons' too,

¹⁰ The grave in the middle of Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy is not Cosimo's but that of his father, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici; Cosimo's tomb will be in the vault below the High Altar of San Lorenzo.

1146 that never yet since Adam was their like.
 Inside the walls of Florence and beyond
 he's built, first Cafaggiuolo and then Trebbio,
 1149 palaces that are quite beyond compare;
 another at Careggi that's unique
 in its great beauty, between hill and plain:
 1152 from one pole to the other, without equal.
 And the house that he's built up in Milan,
 a gift to him from the unrivalled might
 1155 [f. 21v] of their most excellent and great sovereign duke.
 He's built at least three quarters of his father's
 house in Florence, with rooms so opulent
 1158 that every other beauty is eclipsed.
 And nobody at all, dead or alive,
 has ever seen a house more beautiful
 1161 than our illustrious citizen has built,
 so awe-inspiring and so dignified
 that I can think of nothing to compare,
 1164 but go and see it if you want the truth.
 This is the palace full of wondrous things
 that cost and is worth more than a whole city,
 1167 and Cosimo lives there with all his household.
 Bedchambers, loggias, and courtyards and halls
 and so many devices, rich and rare:
 1170 no king or emperor has such as these.
 Reliefs and figures in rich serpentine,
 alabaster and porphyry and marble,
 1173 columns and capitals and fine-worked stone.
 There is one ceiling like a heavenly sky,
 with gold and silver on an azure ground,
 1176 beyond my poem's power to convey.
 I do not think the choir of seraphim
 on high could shine more sweetly than do those
 1179 intaglios placed there with such great skill.
 There is such craft and skill in all the stone,
 and all the various ironwork and inlay,
 1182 the wondrous architecture and the brush,
 that neither I, nor yet a man divine,
 [f. 22r] could find the words that would express one half
 1185 of what my fantasy perceives right here.
 There is a chapel, so adorned that it
 has none to rival it in all the world,
 1188 designed so perfectly to worship God.
 And anyone who goes to look at it
 says that the tabernacle must belong,
 1191 such is its beauty, to the Triune God.
 This palace has a lovely garden too,
 with courtyard, loggias, vault, and pool and lawn
 1194 all laid and blooming all within a morning.
 And it is all disposed so pleasantly

1197 with laurels, myrtle, orange trees and box
 that there's a guide to what is planted there.
 Dancing more sweetly there than words can tell
 1200 are jasmine, violets, roses and lilies,
 and flowers of blue and yellow, white and red.
 And let nobody be surprised to find
 that there are animals and little birds
 1203 completely unafraid of any snares;
 and, to conclude, it holds every delight
 that can be had in this our mortal life,
 1206 and all this cost a hundred thousand florins.
 The buildings I've described together cost
 three hundred thousand florins, maybe more,
 1209 of gold, and this I promise is God's truth.
 And what he built in Jesus' name he then
 endowed with farms and gardens, and to some
 1212 [f. 22v] he gave less, and to others more than two.
 He's also built along the way, wherever
 he's needed to conduct his businesses,
 1215 with different pledges, lords and emperors.
 And to the craftsmen in these arts he's given
 work and does so still, here and abroad,
 1218 in greater numbers than I can recount.
 He's always based his business deals on truth,
 and the flowering of this great and noble age
 1221 is based on faith and on integrity.
 And for this reason, God has granted him
 glory and reputation, wealth and pomp,
 1224 known to all men, who hear what they can't see.
 And there's no fear that glory such as this
 might fail, because it's granted by the One
 1227 whose gifts are never threatened by decay.
 The blessed Trinity, of one accord,
 with glory gives him also a long life,
 1230 that seldom, even never, is man's lot.
 See now how infinite his glory is:
 for both his father's and his mother's stock
 1233 are generous, magnificent and loved.
 See now how his glory reigns supreme in Heaven,
 as he beholds his sons and grandsons prosper,
 1236 in power, wealth, glory, and eternal fame.
 He see that he's the source of gifts bestowed
 upon his city, and of crafts and skills,
 1239 and that all Florentines are loyal to him,
 [f. 23r] the small, the middle class, the great and worthy,
 the young, the old, widows and orphans too,
 1242 are colourless unless first sketched by him.
 But everyone, with Sibylline desire
 both for themselves and for the common good
 1245 goes to his house to ask for his advice

and never goes away unsatisfied
 but always sated, for both great and small
 1248 are seen to thank him and to leave him gifts.
 There's not a man, I say, of such esteem,
 no prince, no king of such unbounded honour,
 1251 no cardinal (I should have said before),
 no master craftsman nor any great lord,
 who doesn't go with reverence and love
 1254 and joyful mien to pay his compliments.
 Just to lay eyes on him many have walked
 for many miles, determined in their hearts,
 1257 leaving their families and their native lands,
 and travelling down to him on every path.
 And if the stones could speak, they'd surely say
 1260 good things of him, and they would speak the truth.
 Now I'll relate to each and all of you
 the best and most extraordinary thing
 1263 that Cosimo has done in all his life,
 in fathering Piero and Giovanni,
 his sons, legitimate and virtuous,
 1266 the enemies of vice, and foes to fraud.
 Such was the glory to which both were born
 [f. 23v] and such the grace conceded them by Heaven,
 1269 no mortal man received such grace before.
 Most truly they are born the sons and heirs
 of Cosimo the great, and make themselves
 1272 like him, and in their deeds this can be seen.
 This natural heredity of theirs
 in childhood and in adolescence, then
 1275 in young adulthood was so great that none
 could rival them in their magnificence
 of jousts and weddings, music, songs and dances,
 1278 in skill with arms, and also in great learning.
 And they've held all the highest offices
 within my highest council, and with such
 1281 good order that they are beyond compare.
 Let no man boast or pride himself that he,
 in his desire for glory among men,
 1284 has risked his power and his life and wealth,
 except for them, who run at the quintain,
 and pursue glory in all kinds of jousts,
 1287 all else regarding as both false and vain,
 and so they leave their memory for all time
 throughout the world, and make men speak of them,
 1290 not with short speeches but with epic tales.
 They've started on great building, like their father:
 Poggio Fiesolano can be seen,
 1293 Giovanni's country seat already started.
 Below the crest, but high above the plain,
 he's working on the oratory of San

1296 [f. 24r] Girolamo, and this moves on each day.
 And right beside the church, on its right hand,
 he's built a palace fit for a true lord,
 1299 and spent so much that I could not say what,
 but in nobility, it does exceed
 all others, and from the foundations up
 1302 he wanted nothing of the former structure.
 Giovanni, with five other prudent men,
 was sent as an ambassador to Christ's
 1305 most holy Vicar, Callixtus the Third,
 by my most mighty Priors, setting out
 with such magnificence his fatherland
 1308 gained much in reputation from this deed.
 My son, pay sweet attention now to what
 I have to say about the excellence
 1311 of Piero, to whom I will now return.
 If anyone would wish to make a search
 around the world and back, to east and west,
 1314 from Arctic to Equator, he would not
 find one endowed with such great excellence,
 and so magnanimous and of such virtue,
 1317 so just and temperate and of such prudence,
 as Piero, who possesses all the virtues,
 so hale and whole, enfolded in his breast,
 1320 and using them for good, not hiding them.
 Therefore, prepare yourself to good effect
 to spread the news of your most worthy praise
 1323 of Cosimo's most perfect firstborn son,
 [f. 24v] because it is through him that Florence finds
 triumph and glory, for whatever he
 1326 asks for in heaven, God grants it to him."
 And I replied to her with purest zeal:
 "All that you tell me I shall put in verse
 1329 without omitting any word of it."
 And she then spoke with words both sweet and clear:
 "My heart must now call memory to arms,"
 1332 she said, when I replied to her like this.
 "I don't know where to start to tell you all
 about his glory, so, almighty God,
 1335 I pray that you will grant me now your aid.
 His youth was spent in triumphs, jousts and feasts,
 in weddings, and Apollo's art imbibed
 1338 at the foot of the mount of Pegasus;
 then when he came to man's estate he turned
 to take part in my city's government
 1341 and Cosmo passed to him the leading role.
 And first he travelled as ambassador
 to Venice, and with no less dignity
 1344 than kings command in royal majesty;
 and there this noble personage concluded

the League, a treaty held in high esteem
 1347 and reputation throughout Italy.¹¹
 It's true to say he's father, mother, nursemaid
 to my Florentia, and by hill and dale
 1350 he makes her triumph on the wings of glory.
 Then he went to Milan as embassy
 [f. 25r] when the young Sforza son took up the staff
 1353 of Most Illustrious Duke, of sovereign fame,
 and when the duke laid eyes on this great man
 he reverently embraced him and he said,
 1356 'I rule because of you and of you father.'
 His words, however, did not stop with these.
 'This kingdom's yours', he added, and to Cosmo
 1359 he wrote the words he'd spoken to the son:
 'Our acquisition gives me cause for joy,
 for what I have is much more yours than mine
 1362 and ink speaks words that come right from my heart'.
 He went as our ambassador to Rome
 when Nicholas, our great and holy pope,
 1365 received his papal crown. Another five
 good citizens went with him, and they swore
 devout obedience to the Holy Father,
 1368 in a solemn and beautiful oration.
 My words could not describe the great display
 of gold and silver, and of dress and robes
 1371 with which Piero appeared before the pope.
 Not even when Rome triumphed and rejoiced
 and was both queen and mistress of the world
 1374 and every word she spoke was soon obeyed,
 did she have any citizen so blithe
 or yet so full of pomp or grand display
 1377 that Piero's pomp would not eclipse it all.
 And on the holy day sacred to Mars,
 the envoys all set out for Tivoli,
 1380 [f. 25v] and the camp of the king of Aragon,
 and when they reached him, fearlessly and bold
 they gave his Majesty our embassy,
 1383 without succumbing to the snares he laid.
 All the great glory that this man has brought
 and given to my city, I've resolved
 1386 to relate to all those who do not know it.
 With his wise counsel and his strength he's tamed
 and crushed my foes and all their thieving ways
 1389 and made me Italy's most lovely home.
 Now you can see if he's his father's son,
 for now he's built a chapel out of marble
 1392 in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mother,
 within the Servite church, standing so proud.

¹¹ The Italian League, known also as the Peace of Lodi was signed on 9 April 1454; Piero represented Florence there, and continued to Venice.

1395 so worthy and so beautifully adorned,
 that all the world speaks of it in amazement.¹²
 The Blessed Virgin shelters there, receiving
 the Angel Gabriel's greeting, that has brought
 1398 such grace to every corner of the world.
 And this was not enough to quench his thirst:
 the hermitage up at Camaldoli
 1401 now has the spacious oratory he built,
 and up at San Miniato outside Florence
 he's built a second building in the church
 1404 magnificent, sublime and most ornate.¹³
 His soul and his desire aspire alike
 to worldly glory and to worship God,
 1407 and his sole purpose was and will be this.
 [f. 26r] All other goals he's put out of his mind
 and turned his heart and soul and his desire
 1410 to gath'ring these two roses, nothing else.
 And in these acts of piety I've mentioned
 he's furnished gold and silver for the altars,
 1413 and chasubles and many other things,
 and often given paintings for the altars,
 and choirs and pulpits, such that he has spent
 1416 on these, and on construction, a great treasure."
 I found myself quite lost for words as she
 was speaking thus, and to myself I said,
 1419 "I am not strong enough to bear this weight."
 And she said, just as if she'd heard these words,
 "My son, you must keep following this path."
 1422 I nodded that I would, and to myself
 I said, "O noble bough, o gentle spur
 that shoots from Cosimo's most noble trunk
 1425 as does a lovely rose from a good cane,
 my spirits, gentle soul, will never have
 their fill of praising all your deeds as one
 1428 who never wavers from what's good and true.
 And if my wit were not so impotent,
 I'd make serpents bow down, tigers and bears,
 1431 and make their bitter poison sweet, and make
 sweet-flavoured kisses from their cruel bites.
 And in their course I'd stop the raging currents
 1434 of seas and lakes and mountain springs and rivers
 just by singing the sweetness of your ways,
 your great achievements and accomplishments,
 1437 [f. 26v] that shine forth as examples for the world.

¹² The shrine of the Annunziata in the church of Santa Maria dei Servi (the Santissima Annunziata) was commissioned by Piero de' Medici, and completed to Michelozzi's design in 1448.

¹³ The Chapel of the Crucifix is the *tempietto* at the end of the nave, designed by Michelozzo on Piero's commission in 1447 or 1448 to house the Crucifix that bowed its head to St Giovanni Gualberto. The Crucifix was moved to the Vallombrosan church of Santa Trinita in Via Tornabuoni in 1617.

But if I can't describe them with my words
 your feats will compensate for my defects
 1440 since your great deeds surpass my halting words.”
 She spoke again: “In virtue he's the equal
 of Cosimo his father, and in glory,
 1443 and no less worthy in his reputation.
 The choirs of angels in the court of heaven
 have granted him their favour, so that he
 1446 is born – *gloria mundi* – of worthy mother.
 And by his side his bride is as a queen,
 fit to be wife to such a man as he,
 1449 and in his household handsome men and women.
 There is no lord so great he does not come
 to visit him at home, or who has not,
 1452 with great magnificence, saluted him
 and come with honeyed words upon his lips
 to speak as sweetly as fair Philomel
 1455 who leaves her cage to sing in laurels green.
 The palace where he lives is always full
 of citizens who go to visit him
 1458 and come into his presence with great joy.
 And Cosimo has placed him in control
 of treasury, of government and state,
 1461 responsible for better and for worse,
 and this he's done to render him eternal
 in fame and glory, as did the almighty
 1464 eternal Father for his dearest Son.
 [f. 27r] And mark my words: my people who observe
 obedience to the lily and the cross
 1467 do not change step without his wise advice,
 and magistrates and officers both great
 and small act only when they've heard his view,
 1470 and desire nothing but what he consents.
 And do you want to see how fervently
 they're loved by all my people just as one,
 1473 without being hated by a single man?
 It was the year of our dear Son of God
 one thousand and four hundred eight and fifty,
 1476 in August, and on the eleventh day,
 when my Lord Priors, on Piero's orders, came
 out with the Standard Bearer to the steps,
 1479 sounding the trumpets for a parliament.
 The people, knowing that this was an order
 given by Piero, came into the piazza,
 1482 without even a breastplate for protection;
 indeed, instead of helmet and cuirass
 they wore their most expensive robes of crimson,
 1485 as men do when they dress for celebration.
 And when the motion of that day was read,
 the people were all asked if were happy

1488 with it, and everyone there shouted ‘Yes!’.
 Three times they shouted ‘Yes!’ as they stood there
 before the Priors, who in their presence there
 1491 called notaries to make a public record.
 For love was all this done, and not for fear,
 [f. 27v] because the people all came without arms
 1494 and all had freedom to both speak and act,
 and by this we can see how Piero’s loved
 by all of Florence’s inhabitants,
 1497 and in this way he stabilized the state.
 A council was appointed, secretaries,
 scrutineers, and selectors, who bestowed
 1500 on merit all the highest offices;
 on Piero’s orders, Lord Priors were created
 to maintain justice the rule of law,
 1503 along with Ten Officials who were told
 to punish sin and wickedness and vice;
 the Captain and the Eight, whose orders were
 1506 to root out and to scatter wickedness;
 and these acted at once and sent away
 the scandal-mongers, to restore the peace
 1509 and free us all fear and jealousy.
 And that these mighty men have doused the blaze
 and acted on behalf of the new state
 1512 brings pleasure and delight to Florentines
 who see them focussing on citizens,
 on making laws to shape an honest life,
 1515 and those who plot against him will be punished.
 O great Piero, how great this triumph is,
 that flows from you and from your generous virtue,
 1518 because you’re ever ready to do good.
 Now liberty and justice are maintained
 within my city, and there crowned by truth,
 1521 and now the hand of Piero holds the reins.
 [f. 28r] Rejoice, O Florence, because you have Piero!
 Piero, rejoice, because Florence is yours!
 1524 and one maintains the other’s high estate.
 We see and know from our experience
 that God loves and increases both of them
 1527 and loves them equally, without distinction.
 And to help Piero’s reputation grow
 he whetted the pope’s appetite to make
 1530 a new crusade against the infidels.
 And on this subject you will hear the greatest
 triumph ever mounted in this city
 1533 by my own people in the months of April
 and May, at the unerring will of Piero,
 in honour of the young count of Pavia
 1536 who came to meet the Holy Father here.
 This triumph that took place within my walls

I want you to describe, my perfect son,
 1539 in every part and in the finest detail,
 because I know that you were there in person
 at every single part, and that you made
 1542 a careful mental note of everything.”
 And I replied, “O merciful and noble
 Lady, I’ll gladly do what you request
 1545 to add more lustre yet to Piero’s glory.
 Nor will it be a burden, pain or anguish,
 but any word of mine, without yours first,
 1548 would just stand withered, leafless in this garden,
 for I could not describe what happened then
 [f. 28v] unless you first repeated it to me.
 1551 So you must play the tune so I can dance.
 I first must drink the waters at your fount
 for without them my flame would fade away
 1554 and I could offer you nothing of worth.”
 She said, “You want me now to speak and I
 am happy to recount my glory, and
 1557 the glory of that one who brings me joy.
 But first, I call on Jove and every star
 that shines in heaven to come now at once
 1560 and give their aid to my poor feeble tongue.
 In fourteen fifty-eight, His Holiness
 Pope Pius made a final resolution
 1563 to lift his pace and send a Christian army
 against the Turkish infidel, God’s foe;
 and he decided he would go himself
 1566 to tell all Christians what he did desire,
 and by his legate he sent to announce
 that he was coming, and he wished to stay
 1569 and rest in Florence for a day or two.
 A courteous reply was sent to this,
 that he should come whenever he so wished
 1572 and make himself at home while he was here.
 With this reply in hand he wrote at once
 to Milan to inform the illustrious duke
 1575 of this great undertaking, then he added:
 ‘Despatch your army, with their arms in hand,
 together with your son, down to Bologna,
 1578 to guarantee my route through hill and dale.’
 [f. 29r] The duke decided, with his privy council,
 to send Count Galeazzo all the way
 1581 to meet him in the city of the lily.
 And to the Church’s Shepherd he replied
 that he was happy to do what he asked,
 1584 heedless of hardship or of sun or rain.
 And then he wrote with gladdest salutations
 to Cosimo and Piero, and related
 1587 in clearest language all that had occurred,

and that he wished to send his son for this,
 and asking them to receive his visit warmly.
 1590 There was no need, however, to ask this,
 because as soon as Piero was informed
 that this great lord was coming on a visit,
 1593 he made a resolution that he would
 have him paid every honour possible,
 without omitting anything at all,
 1596 and sparing no expense and love and effort.
 And when my people, in their great discernment,
 saw that Piero wanted this to happen,
 1599 they all rejoiced to welcome him with honour.
 And the Lord Priors, most judiciously,
 deputed eighteen citizens to take
 1602 charge of the welcome and of what was needed
 to honour both the pope and the young count
 from when they crossed the borders, and without
 1605 the least attempt to limit the expense.¹⁴
 And they at once sought audience with Piero
 and then they made arrangements for the things
 1608 [f. 29v] that followed, which I'll now describe to you.
 Piero replied with undisguised delight,
 'I want to get my palace ready now
 1611 to receive this most noble, splendid count.'
 He covered all the walls with arrases,
 and richest cloths of silk, silver and gold,
 1614 and covered floors and balconies with rugs.
 And Piero's chamber, all noble and gay,
 was made fit for an emperor or queen
 1617 for the Agonothete, unconquered lord.
 A canopy with curtains of fringed silk,
 and on the bed a deep blue velvet cover,
 1620 embroidered with the finest gold and silver;
 and everything around shone brightly, more
 than sunshine in the middle of the day,
 1623 and smelt of incense, pine and cypresses.
 His antechamber was no less adorned,
 equipped with bed and canopy and curtains
 1626 and decorated all around, and since
 there's much I do not know, I leave much out,
 but no excess or lack was found, I know,
 1629 because will, power and desire ruled there.

¹⁴ The names of the citizens are given in *Ricordi di Firenze* with problematic punctuation. Four members were chosen from each quarter, in the usual order: Santo Spirito, Luigi di Piero Guicciardini, Luigi di messer Lorenzo Ridolfi, Anton Fantoni, Luca Pitti; for Santa Croce, Bernardo Gherardi and Francesco Orlandi, Andrea Guardi, Franco di Niccolò Sacchetti; for Santa Maria Novella, Francesco di Ventura, Ioanni Bartoli and Giuliano di Lapo Vespucci, Giuliemo di Cardinale Rucellai; for San Giovanni, messer Alessandro degli Alessandri, and Diotisalvi di Nerone Nerone, Neri Bartoloni, Andrea di Lotteringo; in addition, one minor guildsman, the butcher, Niccolò di Zanobi di Bonvandi. The eighteenth member must have been a *camerlengo* to record expenditure, and their will have been a notary to minute every part of the process.

On one side there's a door of inlaid wood
 that leads into a chapel that's so lovely
 1632 no one ever tired of seeing it.¹⁵
 The altar there is nobly decorated
 with gold and silver, velvet and brocade,
 1635 unparalleled in modern times and ancient.
 And likewise on the other side you see
 [f. 30r] a door so artful that it looks just like
 1638 a high relief, and yet it's smooth intarsia;
 his study's there,¹⁶ a great triumph of beauty,
 done with such skill and order and proportion
 1641 and representing an angelic dance
 done in intarsia, with the greatest art,
 and painting, and perspective, and intaglio,
 1644 depicting buildings with great mastery.
 It holds books in great number, all adorned,
 and alabaster and chalcedon vases,
 1647 with finest gold and silver decorations.
 It hold the best and the most beautiful:
 made thus by nature or by human wit,
 1650 and raised to such a level of perfection.
 And to this highest standard all the rooms
 are decorated, bedrooms, loggias, halls,
 1653 their walls and ceilings, from the top to bottom
 of the great palace, in which every noble
 and spacious room is decorated with
 1656 hangings over the doors and seats and walls.
 The garden too, so full of different fruits
 and marvellous things, was decorated so
 1659 that others are judged ugly by compare.
 Now turn your mind and turn your eyes to see
 what Piero and his deputies arranged
 1662 to house the pope and all the papal household.
 They had the rooms within Santa Maria
 Novella all prepared in grandest style,
 1665 without economies of any kind,
 with arrases and drapes, so handsomely
 [f. 30v] that never yet was any preparation
 1668 more worthy, great or beautiful as this.
 It seemed fit for the ensign and the person
 whom our great Emperor who reigns in heaven
 1671 left here on earth, to take his holy place,
 successor to St Peter, who unlocks
 and opens heaven to all Christian souls.
 1674 Blessed be that Shepherd, he who never fails.

¹⁵ The description of the chapel in the Medici Palace evidently precedes Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes (1459–1461).

¹⁶ The *studiolo* contained twelve majolica *tondi*, by Luca della Robbia, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; see John Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, vol. 1, London 1964.

A new space was constructed for his horses,
 more than a hundred, which when it was done
 1677 cost more than sixteen hundred golden florins.
 Apartments for the cardinals were likewise
 constructed and prepared, so grandiose
 1680 that the imperial palace would seem ugly.
 And so that all the things that were adorned
 as richly as can be are not left out,
 1683 I'll tell how Piero, with his eighteen colleagues
 arranged to decorate Santa Maria
 del Fior, with laurel, arras and banners,
 1686 all with the most supreme and wondrous taste.
 I cannot find the words that would describe
 the way the choir and cupola appeared
 1689 to have become a part of Heaven's choir.
 A decorated canopy, created
 by a skilled artist's hand, hung there, suspended
 1692 in the air right above the papal arms.
 The beautiful high altar was adorned
 with holy relics and the blessed head
 1695 of San Zanobi, glorified in Heaven.
 This holy tribe was circled night and day
 [f. 31r] by a great multitude of burning torches
 1698 and veneration of them never ceased.
 And likewise, San Giovanni was prepared,
 and in the middle of the baptistery,
 1701 resting on the fonts, they built a platform;
 and there the one in charge of this displayed
 upon a lovely altar, all the silver
 1704 without omitting any single piece.
 And draped above it was a golden cloth
 most beautiful, and banners were displayed
 1707 in the most noble order all around.
 No record handed down, by scribes or word
 of mouth, tells us of decorations new
 1710 or ancient that do not pale next to these.
 The wall behind each altar lavishly
 was decorated with crimson brocade
 1713 and all the floor was overlaid with rugs.
 Part of the silverware contained the story,
 sculpted by one whose skill exceeds that of
 1716 a Polyclitus in art and proportion,
 of the life and the passion of the glorious
 Baptist San Giovanni, from his birth
 1719 until he was beheaded; and upon
 the altar, one could see, in pride of place
 his holy head, with all its decoration
 1722 of gold and silver finely worked together,
 surrounded by the other holy relics,
 and all the people came to do them homage

1725 with all the mysteries and great ceremony.
 And fixed into the wall around them were
 [f. 31v] so many candlesticks, and all of silver,
 1728 in which great candles burned continuously.
 And when these preparations had been made,
 they turned to decorate Santa Maria
 1731 de' Servi, who is advocate in heaven
 for every one, our glorious Star who pleads
 before her Son for sinners, so that God
 1734 will keep them safe in glory and in grace.
 There they prepared the altar and the chapel
 of the most glorious Virgin Mother Mary
 1737 who gave birth and retained her maidenhead.
 These preparations were so marvellous
 with so much great and worthy ornament
 1740 that none more beautiful was ever seen.
 Around the Nunziata there were placed
 some fifty lamps, and each one made of silver,
 1743 burning in veneration of our Lady.
 And all inside the chapel and without
 are images in such a quantity
 1746 that surely they must number many hundreds,
 that are, I do declare, of gold and silver,
 that she receives as gifts both day and night
 1749 from those who come from near and from afar;
 and there are many thousands more of wax
 that represent the miracles she's worked
 1752 on land and sea and every shore between,
 the fallen, wounded, miserable and fractured,
 and those battered by waves and wind and fire
 1755 and many who've been captured and then freed.
 And all these images are offerings
 [f. 32r] made to the chapel, where they stand in prayer
 1758 and supplication to the holy Virgin..
 Infirmary and health are represented:
 of feet and legs, of arms and chests and bodies,
 1761 of ships and galleys, and cruel accidents.
 Candles are brought of every size and shape
 from everywhere, by those who place their trust
 1764 in the Annunziata's miracles.
 The lights around her are kept always lit
 so those who stand before the holy Virgin
 1767 believe that they've arrived in paradise,
 because with all the preparations now,
 the gifts that she's been given make a show
 1770 of a night sky quite full of twinkling stars.
 And then our citizens wisely disposed,
 in honour of this Milanese duke's son,
 1773 to mount triumphs and glorious celebrations
 the fame of which would shine throughout the world,

- 1776 so that the great goodwill and all the love
 my people bear him may bring him to them.
 Where people use their strength and their good will,
 everything will succeed, because I know
 1779 that faith and diligence can never die.
 The very first decision was to hold
 a ball, in the Mercato Vecchio, just
 1782 as grand and as elaborate as could be,
 and then, without a moment's hesitation
 every young man and damsel was invited
 1785 to get everything ready without fail.
 Orders were given then to set up seats
 [f. 32v] and platforms, and erect the canopies,
 1788 and also fences round the market places.
 And now I want to tell you in plain words
 about the reverend Captains of the Parte
 1791 who ordered for Piazza Santa Croce
 a joust, most fierce and most magnificent.
 They chose the jousters, told them when and what
 1794 they had to do, and then sent criers out
 throughout the city, reading the decree
 that anyone who wished to joust could take
 1797 his place with their assurance on the field.
 And then without delay they made arrangements
 for two rich prizes, the most perfect one
 1800 for him who won, the other for the next.
 The first prize was a rich and handsome helmet,
 its crest an eagle, all made out of pearls,
 1803 that clutched a serpent tightly in its talons.
 Its covering was all of crimson velvet,
 embroidered then with gussets decked with pearls
 1806 and each one edged with silver, I believe,
 that cost two hundred ducats, maybe more.
 The second was a helmet with no crest,
 1809 but decorated with fine silver tooling
 in which was seen, most beautifully crafted
 upon the flank, a claw made out of silver,
 1812 and a great plume, most beautifully fitted,
 for which they paid almost a hundred florins.
 And then they ordered that a fence be made
 1815 that would enclose completely the piazza.
 Then scaffolding was built on every side
 [f. 33r] so everyone, both great and small might see
 1818 who had best learnt the lessons taught by Mars.
 Then the committee members all decided
 to have the lions go hunting in the square
 1821 in front of the Palazzo de' Signori,
 and they arranged to import every kind
 of feral animal from wood and plain,
 1824 and offered for them gifts and money too.

They found a way of bringing in fierce dogs
 and ordered a high fence to be built from
 1827 the Palace to the Tetto de' Pisani,¹⁷
 and from the Tetto to San Romolo,
 and then they ordered all the gates be closed
 1830 so that nothing could enter or escape.
 And when these preparations had been made,
 they set about constructing scaffolding,
 1833 so that the public could sit right up high,
 some twenty-two feet up, so they could see
 and so that they could be safe from the lions.
 1836 Around the square they pulled down all the rooves;
 and then they ordered, as they were required,
 a giraffe, and a big round ball to roll
 1839 about among the lions and feral beasts.
 And all these preparations were so great
 that when the word spread round about the city
 1842 visitors flooded in from every side.
 Each small delay seemed like a thousand years
 until they'd see so many lions set free
 1845 and how fierce they would be when the day came.
 Then the committee sent its servants out
 [f. 33v] with orders they should hunt for many days
 1848 though all the woods, across the fields and plains,
 and all the animals they chanced to catch,
 were to be sent at once, dead or alive,
 1851 to them. And in the same way they sent forth
 bird catchers all equipped with snares and nets
 and sparrow hawks and falcons so that they
 1854 should want for nothing. Next they ordered in
 a quantity of peacocks, to be brought
 as if still living to the banquet table,
 1857 for they are good to see and good to eat.
 Then they made one great order to obtain
 poultry and pigeon that would meet their needs,
 1860 and ordered all the butchers to bring meat.
 I'll not disclose the number of each kind
 of sweetmeat that they ordered from the grocers,
 1863 lest my true words be taken for a dream.
 They ordered marzipan and little morsels,
 pine-nuts and almonds, sweet and spicy comfits,
 1866 and sugared seeds of anise and coriander.
 Everyone made a quantity of torches
 both great and small, because they were required
 1869 to light the way the night the court arrived.

¹⁷ *Tetto dei Pisani*: the former seat of the Arte del Cambio (Bankers' Guild) in Piazza della Signoria, demolished in 1871 and replaced by Palazzo Assicurazioni, home of the iconic cafe Rivoire. *San Romolo*: church on the site of the Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, near the corner of Via de' Calzaiuoli. The fenced area must have been triangular, with ample space for the public at the entrances to the piazza.

- 1872 They made orders for wafers and fresh bread,
and duly ordered all the things that they
thought they would need to furnish to their guests.
- 1875 And then they made provision for the days
of fasting with much fish, and lots of lamprey,
and mules all heavy laden with fresh sturgeon.
- 1878 Whenever something's seen or heard to be
[f. 34r] of highest quality, then no one cares
about the price, but will pay what it takes.
- 1881 They made arrangements to have every kind
of perfect wine, both red and white, and both
our own and from abroad, and every type.
- 1884 And not worn out by all this ordering,
they sent men out on horseback everywhere
to make sure they'd missed nothing in their orders.
- 1887 They make provision to have lots of hay
and spelt and barley, and for great big loads
of straw to come to Florence every day.
- 1890 What he says goes, for goods and for their price,
because if they're required, price doesn't matter.
Then they made sure that not a horseshoe nail
was lacking from the things they had to do
to offer presents to the pope and to
- 1893 his cardinals, once all the earthly lords
and prelates had arrived within the walls.
And then my most illustrious Lord Priors
- 1896 in order to do honour to these men
ordered that knights and citizens should ride
out to our border to receive the pope
and honour him with all the highest honours.
- 1902 They deputized our stalwart citizens
in Poggibonsi and in San Casciano
to prepare lodgings of the highest order.
- 1905 Likewise they sent in ceremonial pomp
our leading knightly citizens to meet
and do great honour to the noble son
of Milan's duke, beginning at our border,
[f. 34v] with lightness and good cheer in all their hearts,
- 1908 and leaving nothing out that might be done.
Giovanni and his cousin Pierfrancesco¹⁸
accompanied by many citizens
- 1911 went there, and I hide nothing of the truth.
These citizens went first to Firenzuola
and then to Cafaggiuolo, Piero's villa,
- 1914 to make provision for accommodating
the most illustrious and most noble count.
And everything they could they did to make
- 1917 things ready to receive his highness there.

¹⁸ Pierfrancesco (1430–1476) was the son of Cosimo's late brother Lorenzo.

And now I want to tell the lovely thing
 that young Lorenzo did, Piero's son,
 1920 without a trace of cheapness in the world.
 He went and asked his father cheerfully,
 'Dear Father, please, I ask you, if you will,
 1923 let my desire advise you in this matter.
 It is my thought, my wish and my desire,
 to use whatever power my purse has
 1926 to mount a jubilant and splendid triumph,
 a great and beautiful display of arms,
 of all the fine young men of noble stock,
 1929 in honour of young Galeazzo Maria.
 The centrepiece will be the son of Venus,
 he who has bound and binds with his cruel snares
 1932 legions of noble youth throughout the world.'
 A worthy father's son, grandson to Cosmo,
 and what a noble soul resides in those
 1935 young limbs so radiant and so beautiful!
 No sooner did Piero understand
 [f. 35r] that what his son had asked so earnestly
 1938 was noble, worthy and most beautiful
 than he gave his consent on every point,
 and with his heart quite full of joy he said,
 1941 'Most willingly I grant what you desire.
 Go and find all the finest ornaments
 and decorate the triumph of the planet
 1944 that came here to this earthly sphere to rule.'
 And young Lorenzo, filled with cheer and joy,
 gave orders to prepare all that was needed,
 1947 and that work on the triumph be in secret.
 He pays no heed to cost, as one who just
 wants honour for himself and for the count
 1950 and those who think it otherwise are wrong.
 And various enthusiastic people
 go around spurring on both those who work
 1953 and those in charge of these things I've related.
 Lorenzo then decided how and when
 the display would be held, and named the twelve
 1956 *armeggiatori*, all of tender years,
 good looking, noble, full of fun and honour,
 pleasant and smart and with the finest manners,
 1959 such that he rightly took his place with them.
 And all of these young men that he'd commissioned
 began to organize themselves and find
 1962 richly ornate and beautiful attire.
 And when each single thing had been prepared
 in perfect order, just as I have said,
 1965 I have to tell you now what happened next.
 My people were all waiting joyfully
 to see the pope arrive, the holy Shepherd,

- 1968 [f. 35v] as well as the illustrious young count;
and everyone, from greatest to the least,
and every rank, in joy and jubilation,
- 1971 was working to do honour to the welcome:
one to procure a charger for the joust,
one to cut banners, one caparisons,
- 1974 one trying out to test his strength in arms,
and some both night and day in hidden alleys
attempting to stay upright on their horses
- 1977 for the display of arms out in the street.
Some look for bells to fasten to their steeds,
some decorate their saddles and their reins,
- 1980 with silver tassels or with silver scales.
Every matron and maid jumps up and down
getting instruction to be in the dance,
- 1983 and doing all she can to look her best.
So that they look just right when the day comes,
some order over-dresses of brocade,
- 1986 and some order embroidery with pearls.
Young men who want to look their very best
the day they dance send out to order cloaks
- 1989 of silver and of velvet all adorned.
Some work with pearls and some with finest silver
and some use both on coloured hose and clothes
- 1992 each with his own remarkable device.
Silver brocade was in greatest demand:
everyone wanted it for cloaks and doublets,
- 1995 and happily they made their preparations.
Many beautiful clothes were made anew,
embroidered all with pearls and silver thread
- 1998 [f. 36r] that glistened in the light like shining stars,
all with great trains, and each one richly lined
with sable, ermine, belly-fur of civet,
- 2001 and finished round the edge with silver ribbon.
And everybody toiled both day and night
on practising and getting things arranged,
- 2004 from little folk right up to great patricians.
Florence seemed topsy-turvy in this glory,
even the stones seemed ready to cry ‘Festa!’,
- 2007 and everybody laboured to adorn her.
The men of noble and illustrious stock,
to go and meet the pope and the young count,
- 2010 were each decked out in fine and comely clothes.
I couldn’t start to tell you half the things
they have to do, all day and everywhere,
- 2013 both men and women, with the best goodwill.
Expense is painless, effort does no harm
and every one is fired with such delight:
- 2016 the more he spend the less it seems to hurt.
Spending brings joy, for joyfully he spends,

2019 and those who sell their labour find great joy,
 as does the man who sells his merchandise.
 So every creature that can see or hear
 or feel or make things must be full of joy:
 2022 this celebration benefits all men!
 I can't let you believe or let you think
 that all the craftsmen of the manual arts
 2025 were not included in this preparation
 because the plans were all so grand and regal
 that if they were to be brought to fruition
 2028 [f. 36v] then everybody had to do his bit.
 Every last kind of craftsmen in the guild
 of silk workers pitched in and lent a hand,
 2031 and grocers of a range of different kinds,
 the guild of armourers, down to a man,
 and lance-makers and trainers of all kinds,
 2034 blacksmiths and ironsmiths and the timber workers,
 saddlers and banner-makers, also painters,
 goldsmiths, embroiderers and furriers,
 2037 shoemakers, tailors, stampers in the mint,
 dancers, and braiders, doublet-makers too,
 hunters of birds with hawks and dogs and nets,
 2040 as well as game, and meat and poultry butchers,
 monks, observant friars, brothers and priests,
 every last one joined in the preparations
 2043 with jubilation and with joyful cheer.
 It could be said that Florence is the dance
 and all the population can join in,
 2046 the happy couple are the pope and count.
 Upon my oath, I promise you that what
 I've told you here is just a fraction of
 2049 what was prepared to celebrate their visit.
 But what came next I definitely know:
 for it was far, far greater than was planned,
 2052 since every man went to his very limit.
 As everybody laboured in this way
 preparing all these lovely entertainments,
 2055 the count came to the city of Bologna
 with all his court and all his noble troops,
 two thousand horse, a thousand infantry
 2058 [f. 37r] and with the retinue his father gave him
 of nobles and of leading citizens,
 such that there never was a court so grand
 2061 that this one was not three times bigger still.
 A few days later, this wise lord and strong
 got everything in order, for such was
 2064 his longing to see Florence and her gates.
 His men at arms and infantry he left
 back in Bologna, needing no such men
 2067 as he rode on along the way to Florence.

And as the noble prince went on his way
 a multitude of people from Bologna
 2070 escorted him with great magnificence
 for many miles across their territory
 and then they took their leave from their great lord
 2073 who thanked them all with greatest courtesy.
 Then as he made his way towards my borders,
 accompanied by all his courtiers,
 2076 his lords and knights of pleasant disposition
 he had with him, and noble men and squires,
 and all those things required by such a prince,
 2079 the firstborn son of such a mighty lord.
 And if I were to name each of the men
 sent by his father, one by one, I think
 2082 that you would marvel just to hear their names.
 The lord bishop of Modena was first,¹⁹
 Tiberto, lord Taddeo,²⁰ and other lords,
 2085 and knights and gentlemen, each one sublime.
 And at Bologna's border, the great Lord
 Astorre of Faenza²¹ came to meet him
 2088 with every reverence and greatest honour,
 [f. 37v] and he entreated his magnificence
 to be content to join with him and with
 2091 his son, to make their journey down to Florence.
 The great count said, 'I most gladly consent!',
 and off he rode with, his heart filled with delight
 2094 and with about four hundred men and horses.
 Their first place where they lodged, or rather stayed,
 within Florentine borders was the city
 2097 of Firenzuola, perfectly prepared.
 There all the knights and citizens awaited.
 Giovanni and the others did him all
 2100 honour possible in these border lands.
 And then next day, when light came, they rode out
 for Cafaggiuolo, and those citizens
 2103 accompanied the most illustrious lord.
 There, this great and illustrious ducal son
 was welcomed by Giovanni to the palace,
 2106 but there Cosmo alone came forward to greet him
 because he wished to honour Galeazzo
 by offering his house and all it held,
 2109 and its adornment of arras and drapes.
 Look upon Cosmo's magnanimity!
 Look how he loves the duke and this young count
 2112 with singular and most enduring love.
 And then the next day, coming down the mountain

¹⁹ Jacopo Antonio Della Torre, bishop of Modena.

²⁰ The *condottieri* Tiberto Brandolini from Forlì and Taddeo Manfredi from Faenza, ruler of Imola.

²¹ Astorre II Manfredi, lord of Faenza.

they reached Montughi, where this gentle lord
 2115 rested his head illustrious and fair
 within the noble palace of the Pazzi,
 and this was on the seventeenth of April
 2118 in our Lord's year of fourteen fifty-nine.
 [f. 38r] The road both down and up teemed with the crowds
 for every citizen went out to meet him
 2121 and all go willingly to do him honour.
 Throughout the city and in every part
 all the shops were closed, by express order
 2124 of the Lord Priors of my dominion.
 Pipers and trumpeters went out to meet him
 and the rectors, and dressed in livery
 2127 of silver decked with pearls, a hundred youths.
 And with this solemn entourage, he entered
 the gates of Florence, scion of his line,
 2130 to be revered by all who dwell herein.
 First came his baggage train, a splendid sight
 of fifty mules, and each draped with his standard,
 2133 as just a taste of great magnificence.
 No one in Florence sits around inside,
 but rather runs to the street or balcony
 2136 celebrate the entry of this lord.
 Matrons and maids, young men and servant boys,
 all run to see this most illustrious lord
 2139 and his great beauty and also his wealth.
 This great wise lord entered, preceded by
 his lords and knights and all his men
 2142 and all were honoured by our citizens.
 Then came his squires and all the dignitaries
 surrounded by the youths in livery
 2145 who each did reverence to the visitors.
 And having entered Florence in this order
 they rode around the city sweet and fair
 2148 until they came to where my Priors waited
 [f. 38v] to meet him on the steps of the Palazzo,
 and each one stood there waiting in that place.
 2151 And seeing that, the count sprang from his saddle,
 each went towards the other and they met
 before the doorway of the great Palazzo.
 2154 There the great lord embraced my own Lord Priors
 and my Priors embraced him, and with great joy
 the noble Count Galeazzo kissed them all
 2157 and they all kissed the count, each in his turn,
 and when they'd finished, then the great lord spoke:
 'My most illustrious father, with my mother,
 2160 most faithful to the holy Church, have sent me
 to honour now His Holiness the Pope
 who's taken on the just and holy task
 2163 of scattering the idol-worshippers.

He's given me the task of coming here
 to meet with you, Lord Priors, and to offer
 2166 all in their power, proud and jubilant.
 And this I do, and offer you myself
 my brothers, and my property and state
 2169 and every single thing that we could do.'
 To these most noble, wise and ornate words
 my excellent Lord Priors made reply,
 2172 and this is what the Standard Bearer said
 in frankest terms and in the clearest language,
 'The Priors and the people one and all,
 2175 together in their love and unity,
 thought the day would never come when we
 would see your most illustrious person here
 2178 in Florence, which we hope will bear great fruit.
 [f. 39r] As our reply to your words we now say
 that you and your illustrious lord parents
 2181 have our deep thanks with perfect heart and soul.
 And we shall never cease gladly to place
 our people and possessions at the service
 2184 of your most noble and most mighty state.
 We do not wish to tire you with more talk,
 but rather go and rest and take your ease,
 2187 because we'll meet with you another time.'
 Then he replied, 'I'll come to see you all
 in your magnificence in this fair Palazzo
 2190 when I see that for you it's more convenient.'
 And having spoken thus he took his leave
 and got back on his horse without delay,
 2193 this noble lord of pure angelic presence.
 No need to ask how full the air was then
 of pipes and trumpets and of deep trombones,
 2196 as this most excellent lord got on his horse.
 And then he rode on with that retinue
 until he came to Cosmo's regal palace
 2199 at last, where he dismounted at the door.
 The count went up the stairs to the first floor
 where he found Pier who reverently embraced him
 2202 with never so much happiness and joy.
 And then they both, with arms about each other,
 spoke kind and gracious words to one another
 2205 and gave each other kisses on the face,
 just as the custom is between true lovers.
 Then the count spoke with his angelic voice
 2208 and said he wished to see his father Cosmo.
 [f. 39v] 'He's in the chapel,' Piero said to him,
 and straight away, the great count, fleet of foot,
 2211 took himself to the chapel and went in.
 And finding Cosimo, the great lord went
 and put his arms about him and with love

2214 and reverence he kissed him on the brow,
 Cosimo spoke, ‘Lord, *Nunc dimittis servum*
 2217 *tuum*, according to thy word, in peace.’
 And then he kissed the count with joyful heart,
 embracing him with efficacious zeal
 and never had his fill of doing this,
 2220 delighting so in such signs of affection.
 Then the count said to Cosimo, ‘My most
 illustrious lord father and my mother,
 2223 both told me, as I took my leave of them,
 that I should offer you their very state,
 their persons and whatever they can do,
 2226 and everything remains at your command.’
 And Cosimo replied to the count’s words,
 ‘It is not fitting that a lord should make
 2229 such offers and such gestures to his servant.
 I thank them from my heart in which I hold
 the great and many favours I’ve received,
 2232 and what I have, I wish and hold for them.’
 The count did not hold back or remain mute,
 but with a smile thanked Cosimo for what
 2235 he’d offered and for his paternal help,
 and then said, ‘To two fathers am I son:
 one in Milan, and you’re the other here,
 2238 equal in love of honour and advice.’
 [f. 40r] And Cosimo, with sweet and happy words,
 and eyes that laughed with over-brimming sweetness,
 2241 replied, ‘I love you just as as you desire
 and surely always will, but I’m not worthy
 to be your father, or to have you for
 2244 my son, since you are lord of such a realm.
 With deference and devotion I revere
 your person, and I want you for my lord
 2247 for with such service I rise up to heaven.
 It is my custom night and day to hope
 above all other things in this wide world
 2250 that ere I shuffle off this mortal coil,
 I might yet see your father, now that he
 rejoices in his state and in its triumphs,
 2253 and prospers in the triumphs of this world,
 and that I might yet talk to him, and take
 delight and jubilation in his glory,
 2256 and in his exaltation, face to face,
 and take joy in his great magnificence;
 but my advancing years and failing health
 2259 together have denied my heart such pleasure.
 But God most just, who’s always given me
 more joy than is my due, and given me
 2262 sweetness in every thing that ever happens
 — the scheme of things, my lord, can be seen here,

in that He made you come to give me this
 2265 sweet feeling that I nourish in my heart —
 because when I behold you, noble sire,
 I see your very father and my lord,
 2268 for whom I do intend to live and die.
 I see in you his body and his heart
 [f. 40v] because you are his spirit and his soul.
 2271 If he's the plant and you're the fruit and flower,
 then I entrust to you and him, hands clasped
 in prayer, the welfare of my household here,
 2274 for without you our head would have no soul.'

The count then turned to Cosmo with his face
 all wreathed in smiles and said, 'O dearest father,
 2277 all that we can we give you to deploy,
 and now I swear to God and give my promise
 that we will love both you and your descendants
 2280 forever, with a love that's good and holy.

And then he turned and moved around the room,
 embracing everybody, men and women,
 2283 and children, kissing them with greatest love,
 and said, 'Brothers and sisters most renowned,
 you see me come before you as your brother.'
 2286 And they replied, in language frank and clear,
 'You're not our brother, but you are our lord,
 and as our lord we love you,' they all said.
 2289 And then their lord went off to find the chamber
 in which the fair, serene Seigneur could rest
 and pause to look at it in admiration,
 2292 since it was all adorned most beautifully.

And while the noble count is resting there
 like that, I want you now to think about
 2295 the banquet preparations under way.

The banquets were prepared on a grand scale,
 sublime in quality, design and size,
 2298 with lots of gold and silver and fine linen.

There were so many and such delicate
 [f. 41r] and splendid courses that I couldn't start
 2301 to name each one, not even in a week.

And even if I could, I would not know
 what they all were. You must accept my word:
 2304 the banquet was a meal fit for the gods.

For this was not some meal for rustic yokels,
 but for great noblemen of worth and learning,
 2307 all planned sublimely in the finest detail.

And some were set to doing, some to planning,
 and some on this delight and some on that,
 2310 and every one with faith and love and skill.

These preparations, and more than I've told
 continued all the time the count stayed here,
 2313 and each new day more perfect than the last,

because my Commune issued orders that
 the cost and inconvenience did not matter
 2316 as they did all they could in the count's honour.
 Never before had people spent so much
 so generously and in such harmony
 2319 as now, as each man strove with one desire.
 After the banquets came festivities,
 a thousand kinds of dancing and of song
 2322 to entertain the excellent, noble lords.
 Soft instruments there were of every kind,
 and each one played by masters of such skill
 2325 that melodies of saints came from them all.
 Harps and violas and rebecs and lutes,
 and tambourines and psalteries and organs,
 2328 and dulcimers and monochords and flutes,
 with even more endless joys and delights,
 and the most precious wines both red and white,
 2331 [f. 41v] and baskets in great number full of comfits,
 with orders, 'Come and get them if you want them!',
 and anyone who wanted anything
 2334 received it, without fail, and even servants.
 Everything was free for everyone,
 and as something ran out, then more arrived,
 2337 just as is done when men hold open house.
 No modern gesture of magnificence,
 seen at first hand or known by report,
 2340 would not be put to shame compared to this.
 Everyone takes his pleasure as he will:
 some to admire the palace decoration,
 2343 some in the garden, some just to enjoy,
 some to see how the chapel is adorned,
 some in the bedroom and the *studiolo*,
 2346 some to admire the public rooms, and then
 the golden ceiling, which amazes all
 because when evening comes and every torch
 2349 is lit, it looks just like a heavenly sun.
 The lords and knights and men of the young count,
 lord illustrious of the Milanese,
 2352 were all caught up partaking in these pleasures.
 Cosmo, his sons, his nephew fair of brow,
 both young and old, and both female and male,
 2355 are ever in Visconti's company.
 Each seems to feast his eyes gazing on him,
 because they stare at him, just as the ostrich
 2358 stares at her egg until her chicken hatches.
 They gaze upon his beauty, something new,
 and noble, comely limbs, for none so fair
 2361 [f. 42r] exist nor ever have or will be seen.
 His eyes are all a-shine with the bright light
 set there by Jove and Phoebus with their hands

2364 to force all those around to fall in love.
 His fame eclipses that of fair Narcissus,
 noble Polydorus and Ganymede,
 2367 Patroclus and Hippolytus and Paris.
 And those who study him from head to toe
 see in him an Achilles, a proud Hector,
 2370 and nobody who sees him can deny it.
 Gazing on him is just like running with
 your eyes fixed on the sun, that dazzles so
 2373 that nothing else is visible between.
 No one he sets his eyes on is immune
 to the battle of love, and at first sight
 2376 he's bound by no more than a wisp of straw,
 and says, 'He is my peace and he can give
 me every glory and good thing, and that
 2379 which he detests displeases me as well.
 His grace with God is such that with his gaze
 he could restore to health a dying man
 2382 or bring one dead already back to life.
 He can make rush mats into fine brocade,
 and change a wretched shard of broken glass
 2385 into a noble, fair and precious jewel.
 And here's the living proof that this is true:
 for through him we can see heaven on earth
 2388 and he reveals himself in angel's form.
 And if someone says otherwise, he's wrong,
 because we see and find there in his face
 2391 [f. 42v] a tranquil peace and end to every war.
 So everybody makes his way to see him,
 in the firm hope of finding all that's good.
 2394 The glory's great when one assists so many.
 Do you believe that this exceeds all others?
 His sire is Mars, the lord of the fifth sphere,
 2397 the sacred Muses took him as their lover.
 Before, when I came here into your presence,
 I had just been where drinking never sates,²²
 2400 where every man achieves the highest rank,
 and he receives most just and worthy grace;
 I'd visited the Nine who bring great fame
 2403 to all the good, and to their enemies
 misfortune, and they stand united, ready
 to give rewards and honours to the great
 2406 count and place him on a worthy throne.
 I'd seen the rays and shining lights of those
 fair nymphs who make a circle round the spring,
 2409 so deep that eyes can never reach the bottom.
 I'd seen that sacred mountain all divine,

²² The Hippocrene Spring on Mount Helicon, sacred to the nine Muses, was created when the winged horse Pegasus struck a rock with his hoof. The legendary spring was a source of poetic inspiration.

where shining leaves are picked and turned to crowns
 2412 that bring beatitude to those they wreath,
 and seen the shores that circle them around,
 singing with sweetness and dulcet craft
 2415 to the sound of the waves to which the tenor
 replies and prophesies the mighty glory
 and the great issue to come from the count,
 2418 by grace infused in him by One who does
 all things. And then they said that I should say
 that soon the laurel would shoot forth new leaves,
 2421 [f. 43r] that will restore sweetly him from his woe.
 The high priest said, 'It's rare that we find chosen
 to triumph here a Caesar or a poet,
 2424 but I predict both destinies for him.
 Cosmo and Piero's joy in him, and too
 Giovanni and the rest's devotion to him,
 2427 stem from their gift of prophecy, for they
 foresee his future clearly, and they see
 that Mars has chosen him to be his son
 2430 as he ascends the Pegasaeon mount.'
 I with my people so revere and love him,
 and it's my hope that his most noble virtue
 2433 will be the cause of my ascent to heaven.
 For now I'll say no more about these words
 of prophecy, because the proof will come,
 2436 but I wish now to speak of his great beauty.
 He's polished and he's noble and he's honest,
 and God has given him angelic features
 2439 and everyone who sees him confirms this.
 O glorious Jove, illustrious Apollo,
 and Polyhymnia, help me to remember
 2442 so I can reproduce even one shoot
 of the great bough of beauty and of glory
 of this count's divine person, for his least
 2445 and humblest member would make history.
 Such is the splendour that flows down to him,
 and so many the stars that wreath his brow,
 2448 that words are not sufficient to express them.
 I've seen already many marvels wrought
 by this fair creature, loved by earth and heaven,
 2451 [f. 43v] and he can be compared to them alone.
 But presence often can detract from fame,
 whereas in him it multiplies it more
 2454 than all the threads we find in rich brocade.
 So let the halt and lame make no delay
 in using their free will to leave their homes
 2457 and go on foot or horseback with the aim
 of seeing him, before he rides to battle,
 because the man who sees or touches him
 2460 will thirst no more to see and touch this man.

And if I were to do what those fools do
 when they have seen a vision of Mohammed,
 2463 and put their eyes so they see no more,
 I don't know if I'd ever be reproached,
 because this creature, glorious and blithe,
 2466 embodies every gift that can be given
 by heaven and by Nature, and the planets,
 by fortune, by the fates and destiny,
 2469 and art and wit and order and good measure.
 The sun, Olympian gods, and Trinity
 have never gazed down on such a noble face;
 2472 so now let everyone hasten to see
 this man who was created up in heaven,
 at Nature's pleasure, on a solemn day.
 2475 Now listen, hear and see what he is made of.
 She took first gold and rubies, pearls and silver,
 and milk and blood, and diamonds and crystal
 2478 and from these mixed together came his body;
 and angels circled round him in a dance
 bearing a blessed halo, such that further
 2481 [f. 44r] words could only seem to contain lies.
 They said, 'What glory for the earth and grass
 to find that they're adorned by a such sun
 2484 as would bring rancour to Apollo's gaze.'
 And in this very form that heaven wanted
 Nature composed his body, fair and comely,
 2487 and gave it flesh of sweet williams and roses.
 If anyone could pluck a single hair
 from his fair golden curly locks
 2490 it would suffice to bind icy Diana.
 And of the thousand beauties that she clothed
 him in, if one were to be named, it would
 2493 weigh heavily on even a great poet.
 When Nature wished to give him to the world,
 sixteen times she decked the boughs with leaves
 2496 and flowers, and then stripped them bare again.
 The world was bright and full of sweetest scents,
 mountains and plains and hillsides and deep valleys
 2499 were all painted in many different colours
 with red and blue and white and yellow flowers,
 and without fear of sunshine or of shade,
 2502 birds in the treetops danced and sang their song.
 Alas, why do I have such rustic rhymes
 such brutish and such meagre wit that is
 2505 quite insufficient for a thousandth part?
 Ah, why do I not have a sweeter style,
 so that I could portray in every part
 2508 the sweet proportion of his noble body?"
 But when I heard her speaking thus, I said
 "My dearest Florence, if you've any love

2511 [f. 44v] for me, please don't forsake me at this pass."
 And she replied, "My son, I see you want
 to hear in minute detail all his beauty.
 2514 It's right that you be satisfied in this.
 On the first day, when the great lord arrived,
 I stared at him in Piero's private chamber
 2517 and what I learned I'll relate to you now.
 The clothes he wore, to tell the truth, were all
 finished with gold, a noble little doublet,
 2520 richly enough adorned for any realm.
 Around his neck, this fine count wore a chain
 made out of fair intaglios and fine gold,
 2523 with a rich jewel that made a lovely pendant.
 His hose, which bore his most illustrious emblem,
 were tied with strings each tipped with golden points,
 2526 laced in the latest lacing style from Paris.
 And in his bonnet this most proper lord
 had a gold pin, encrusted both with pearls
 2529 and jewels, and worth a fortune on its own.
 I also saw his hair, blond and resplendent,
 that fell down over two well-shapen ears,
 2532 and looked like rays of sunshine and of stars
 that Love had used to make a thousand snares,
 that he's then stretched to lure so many souls
 2535 and overwhelm them with the fires of love.
 And below it I saw his brow appear
 white skinned, clean lined, and comely to behold,
 2538 smooth and open and fresh, unmarked by lines,
 a head that was angelic, with sweet grace,
 [f. 45r] that glowed with light and whiter more than snow,
 2541 relaxed and broad, and pleasing in its shape,
 it was most fair, and of the proper size.
 And on that brow, in the appointed place,
 2544 I saw two eyebrows, full of nobleness
 as black as coal, after the fire has gone,
 not at all bushy, rather smooth and fine,
 2547 arching around, not too much or too little,
 with the right noble spacing in between,
 and the space underneath them white and fair,
 2550 forming a splendid and most noble arc;
 together they would make a perfect circle.
 and under them I scarcely dared to look
 2553 into the joyful beauty of his face.
 There, not hidden nor on display, I saw
 nothing that was excessive or beyond
 2556 the correct measure of their supreme place,
 but rather not two eyes but divine lights,
 lovely and beautiful in all their movements,
 2559 shining more brightly than the morning stars
 and glittering and shining brightly forth

so that I judged that all beauty dwelt there
 2562 that ever Nature painted in the living.
 They fired their shining darts just like the sun
 so that, I told myself, no one could ever
 2565 resist their force. And, while I fixed my eyes
 on them, it seemed to me that I could see
 and taste the flavours of the farthest shores
 2568 of Jove's almighty realm, and I could scarce
 believe that paradise was to be found
 in any other place but in those eyes,
 2571 [f. 45v] such was the lovely proof they offered me.
 Those eyes were full of so much joy and laughter
 so bright and clear, and so sweetly adorned
 2574 that I could not maintain my gaze on them.
 And chiselled there between them, there appeared,
 descending in its right and proper place
 2577 his fair nose, delicate and sensitive,
 sloping in a straight and direct line,
 as much as duty and good sense allow,
 2580 all in proportion in its length and size.
 Neither to high nor yet to low it seems,
 but of a very good and proper size,
 2583 as is required to make a handsome face.
 And his snowy and delicate white cheeks,
 quite rounded, and not scrawny nor yet puffy,
 2586 again all in proportion in their size,
 and coloured like none else but freshest milk
 that's tinted by new drops of living blood,
 2589 and they've been made to match the hues of dawn
 or like a rose, of sweet carnation pink,
 not seen yet by the sun, but natural,
 2592 and waiting on the cool and verdant bough.
 There is no part of them that is amiss,
 and at their edges, their colour becomes
 2595 that of a noble oriental pearl.
 Perfectly placed and full of love, his mouth
 of rich vermillion makes a perfect O
 2598 of roses, lilies, pinks and other flowers,
 laughing and playful in its every move,
 and so imbued with grace: no other mouth
 2601 was ever similar to this one here.
 [f. 46r] A sweet perfume envelopes all about
 and does not fill the room offensively
 2604 but rather is contained in a small space.
 And that this mouth is powerful we know
 from the angelic and most truthful words
 2607 that make all those who hear them fall in love
 and make his sweetest kisses much desired
 and cause them to be judged beyond all measure
 2610 charming, tasty and sweet, and efficacious.

And with his lips, not gross and overblown,
 resplendent with vermilion and the white
 2613 of swans, fair, beautiful, noble and sweet,
 that cover tiny teeth like ivory
 and silver, which were set in perfect order
 2616 by Nature and the gods. And under these
 there sits a perfect chin, noble and round
 and never jutting out, contained within
 2619 a small and noble circle. There I seemed
 to see the whitest flowers, creamy lilies
 with white roses and pink gillyflowers,
 2622 brought all together in one, with sweet perfume,
 when I gazed at his slim and lovely neck,
 held high, adorned and charming, so that those
 2625 who see it have to worship and adore it,
 of brightest white, marmoreal, delicate
 lovely in all its turns and inclinations,
 2628 and plump to a most pleasurable extent.
 His neck, so soft and beautiful, not hollowed
 out, but all so delicate and smooth,
 2631 and white and noble, like that of Apollo,
 [f. 46v] I saw standing erect on his proud shoulders
 which, like a column, bore most splendidly
 2634 such charm that all who see it crowd around
 filled with desire to hold it in their arms.
 moved by the beauty that envelops it,
 2637 in just the right amount to make it lovely.
 I gazed upon his arms in sheer delight,
 in such a way, that if I were invited
 2640 I'd surely ask to be embraced by them.
 And if someone should come and measure them
 he'd see they were no more nor less than what
 2643 is proper: strong, relaxed, neither too long
 nor yet too short. His hands, all fair and white
 could then be seen, and delicately offered
 2646 to please our taste with sweetness, joy and pleasure,
 in due proportion to his shapely torso;
 they terminate in long and slender fingers,
 2649 each in its place and of appropriate length.
 His beauty blooms with such magnificence
 in his imposing chest and back and sides
 2652 that I would never find words to express it.
 Nothing that's good and fair is lacking in him.
 His waist is noble, and slender, and neat,
 2655 his other limbs are fair and strong and bold,
 his thighs and legs and feet of such a size
 and in proportion, so that nothing's lacking.
 2658 Nothing is to excess in this fair creature.
 I'd tire before I ever found the end,
 for endless are the beauties of this lord,

2661 Madonna Bianca's most illustrious son.
 [f. 47r] Therefore I will retreat and leave the rest
 to be related by a better mind
 2664 that will know how to tell what I cannot,
 and everyone will say that what I've told
 when compared to the truth is but a part,
 2667 and broken into fragments very small;
 With my hoarse style, I've shown about as much
 as a man's tongue could lap up from the sea,
 2670 less than a tiny spark from a great fire.
 What I've said of his beauty is but sticks
 and twigs, or some unusual shape to be
 2673 perceived but darkly in a looking lass.
 Great expertise and skill would be required,
 great wit and expertise to make a cast
 2676 that proved as beautiful as the first form.
 A man who wanted to relate in full
 the loveliness of this creature so fair
 2679 would need to have a master's perfect skill.
 But there's nobody in the world who could,
 and whose account of beauty would not seem
 2682 despicable when set beside the truth.
 Look at his face, that has so sweet an air
 that whatsoever good and true you think
 2685 you'll find there really does exist in him.
 In goodness there is none can rival him,
 nor could I count in one long July day
 2688 all of the worthy properties in him.
 He's like a Julius in nobility
 and in his beauty like a living sun;
 2691 he speaks like Marcus Tullius, sweet and wise.
 [f. 47v] Just see if he's as fair as people say!
 He is a lord of greatest reputation:
 2694 he binds with words all those to whom he speaks.
 His character is quite beyond compare
 in lordliness, prudence, simplicity,
 2697 because these virtues are well-grounded here;
 the difference and the gulf twixt them and others
 is greater than the gulf twixt heav'n and hell,
 2700 twixt darkest night and day, twixt saved and damned.
 In his great state is influence is such,
 and such celestial favour I behold.
 2703 that he'll find glory here and bliss in heaven.
 Mars gives the arms of victory to him,
 Fortune prepares him a great state to rule,
 2706 Minerva gives him sense and Venus zeal.
 I tell something marvellous but true
 that happened to me on the very day
 2709 he entered Florence, right in Piero's chamber.
 There I was, in the presence of the count,

2712 gazing on him in thought and wonderment,
 and contemplating his magnificence:
 so joyful and angelic was his person
 that he managed to hold my eyes quite fixed
 2715 on him for a long period of time.
 He reignited at that point the flame
 of the good love that so did fire my heart
 2718 that for him I'd embark on any quest.
 And now I'll take you back to the great honour
 prepared for him by all my citizens,
 2721 to offer to this great and worthy lord.
 [f. 48r] On the first evening, having eaten well,
 they warmly said good night and went to bed,
 2724 each in the chamber that had been prepared.
 When the next day came, then this noble sire
 went out with all his retinue and in
 2727 the company of many citizens.
 His first visit was to the Nunziata,²³
 where, as I understand, he'd vowed to go,
 2730 and there he fell devoutly to his knees
 and most contritely stayed to worshipped her,
 and with great admiration he gazed on
 2733 the decoration he'd not heard about.
 He remained in the chapel for a mass,
 and when it had been said, and he had made
 2736 his gift, he kissed the altar piously,
 and then admired the objects all around,
 the gold and wax and silver images,
 2739 all so diverse and full of miracles.
 Then with that crowd of citizens and knights
 and lords he left the church and took a stroll
 2742 to see the sights around the noble city,
 his squires always before him, two by two,
 and everyone they met along the way
 2745 did reverence to him and bowed deep and low.
 And with this pretty company the count
 then made his way back home and went to lunch,
 2748 and later, the festivities began.
 He sent a messenger to my Lord Priors,
 to tell their Lordships that he wished to call
 2751 on them next morning, if it suited them.
 [f. 48v] My Lords Priors answered that the count should come
 and always gladly be received, and then
 2754 they ordered and instructed that a hundred
 citizens, and many mounted knights
 should come next day all decked out and prepared
 2757 in ceremonial dress, as is required.
 And the next day they came and gathered round

²³ See n. 10 above.

2760 my good Lord Priors, who then gave their command
that they should fetch the count and bring him there.

At this command, they went without delay
to Cosimo's, and in the great palazzo
2763 they found the count, most splendidly adorned.

And then they said to him with great delight,
'Our Lord Priors await you at your leisure'.
2766 And then Count Galeazzo answered them:

'I shall not for a moment keep you here
but shall without delay make haste to them',
2769 and that was the reply the young count made.

And shortly afterwards, he left the palace
with his men and those citizens in such
2772 triumphal pageant that I can't describe.

I don't think there's a man alive who's seen
or heard of anything that could compare
2775 to them in their sublime magnificence.

In silk and gold and silver each was dressed;
and as he passed he was revered by all
2778 my people, and accompanied this way

he reached the palace of my good Lord Priors.
He found the door thrown open wide for him.
2781 He entered in, and then he climbed the stairs.

[f. 49r] The person of the count had now arrived
with all these people in the Priors' Hall
2784 which was decked out with great magnificence.

My good Lord Priors all came forth to greet
him at the very door of their apartment,
2787 and all embraced him, their hearts filled with joy.

And then the count, with such magnificence,
between the Standard Bearer and the Provost,
2790 went to be seated in the audience hall.

And when each person present had sat down
with pleasant gestures and with reverent bows
2793 the count spoke from a script he had prepared:

'My great illustrious Lords, worthy and solemn,
I come like one of your own citizens
2796 to visit you this day and in this place.

My most illustrious lord and father has
instructed me that I'm to remind you
2799 that he is bound to do you every favour,
however great; my noble mother likewise.

And on behalf of them and on their orders
2802 I offer you their troops and mine as well,
their state, their persons and their property,

to bring their triumph to your happy state
2805 and keep you free of enemies and woe.

Now I must speak just on my own behalf:
I thank you now with all my heart and soul
2808 for the great honour done me since I came

into your territory, for a king
 of Latium could not more honoured here;
 2811 the more you honour me, the less I bring.
 Your actions seem superfluous, my Lords,
 [f. 49v] because my father, in his early youth,
 2814 you welcomed and you treated as a son,
 and he was raised within your city walls,
 and therefore no such honour is required
 2817 for I am simply of his flesh and blood.
 I offer you, my Lords, all that I can,
 I'm ever ready to do what you wish
 2820 and I will never deviate from that.
 And if I fail to satisfy in words
 and deeds before your excellencies, I pray
 2823 that you'll excuse me for my tender years.
 On earth there's nothing loves the sun so much
 as I see myself loved and welcomed here
 2826 by every single subject of this place.
 And for this reason, I've hold in my breast
 a flame of love ignited here by you
 2829 which asks you, as a favour and a duty,
 that as my father always had the love
 both of your lily and of these Lord Priors,
 2832 so you'll accept to have me as your son'.
 To these his prudent and decorous words,
 full of delight and sweetness, my Lord Priors
 2835 made their reply. The city's Standard Bearer
 of Justice said, 'Illustrious, most noble,
 most generous and honourable lord,
 2838 today's the day that we are full of joy.
 Today's the day that gladness fills our hearts.
 Today's the day that heaven's shown to us
 2841 the one we love, who binds us with love's chains.
 These good Lord Priors and all our citizens
 could not lay eyes on anything more dear
 2844 [f. 50r] than your triumphal and most noble face.
 For what you have proposed so gracefully
 we thank you and your father and your mother,
 2847 and offer you Florentia as a daughter.
 And to them and to you we say that we
 will be prepared with all that's in our power
 2850 for all your present and your future needs
 in order to advance your signory;
 and if by chance the need should yet arise.
 2853 you'll find us ever ready, ever swift
 to honour you in just the way we should.
 If we've not done, or do not do full honour,
 2856 let it not be recorded with our sins,
 because our hearts are willing, this we know.
 Such, my Lord, is your merit that we can

2859 honour among one thousand parts but one.
 But of one thing we can most surely boast:
 that we do love you with pure love that's based
 2862 in the charity of the Holy Ghost.
 Each Florentine who sees or hears you holds
 your image in his breast, and deep within
 2865 his celebrating heart it now resides.
 Your most illustrious father, great and true,
 who was raised in this city, as you say,
 2868 is all our glory, triumph and delight.
 And, my Lord, for this reason we have come
 to ask that you commend to him our people
 2871 and these Lord Priors as much as possible.
 And we accept your person, great and good,
 not as a son, but as what pleases you,
 2874 [f. 50v] and that is what we too would have it be'.
 And then this sire, with smooth effective words
 thanked the Lord Priors, and they in turn thanked him,
 2877 and if one spoke, the other was not silent.
 Then they took hands, and kissed each other's face
 and in this way the young count took his leave,
 2880 with far more gestures than I have related,
 went down the staircase of the fair Palazzo
 and with the grand display I have described,
 2883 set out for Cosmo's house in long procession.
 When he got there, he entered through the garden,
 he thanked the citizens and took their hands
 2886 most happily, and then went to his chamber.
 Now I want you to hear, my precious son,
 how lords from all around made their way there
 2889 to pay a visit to Milan's young count.
 For three days after the young count arrived,
 so many lords from the surrounding states
 2892 came to present themselves to the great man.
 The lord of Rimini made haste to come,
 and Simonetto, ruler of Forli,
 2895 Count Filippo, Ottavian of Urbino,
 Carlo degli Oddi, and all of them each day
 sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot
 2898 went with him all the time during his stay.²⁴
 This most illustrious lord goes every day
 to visit my great city's fairest sights,
 2901 because he never sits in idleness.
 He saw San Marco, so richly adorned
 with great and beautiful magnificence,
 2904 cloisters and gardens with a thousand sights.

²⁴ Sigismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini; Simonetto Simonetti, *condottiere* of pope Pius II, who will die in the rout of Sarnia in 1459; Francesco IV Ordelaffi, lord of Forli; Filippo Maria Sforza, count of Corsica, younger brother of Galeazzo; Ottaviano Ubaldini, younger brother of Federigo, duke of Montefeltro; Carlo degli Oddi, Perugian *condottiere*.

He saw the great designs for San Lorenzo,
 and what's being done with such pre-eminence
 2907 of art and of expense and sublime skill.
 He saw the sacristy of such great size
 that just to see it filled his heart with joy
 2910 for all of them whose work it was and is.
 He asked to see Santa Maria del Fiore,
 and went into the space below the dome
 2913 all decorated with the finest things.
 He marvelled at the place and its adornment
 and then he went to venerate the head
 2916 of our most holy bishop, San Zanobi.²⁵
 And then on Saturday this noble lord
 asked if he could hear mass in San Giovanni,
 2919 a solemn mass to be sung by the choir.
 So beautiful a thing was never seen.
 When the day dawned, the count, to tell the truth,
 2922 all dressed in white from head down to his toe,
 looked just the very part of purity,
 looked just the part of what he truly is:
 2925 an angel of eternal Triune God.
 Those who saw him that day declared the gods
 and goddesses had made him without flaw,
 2928 such that none ever had been made like him.
 With many acts both reverent and devout
 the count went to the throne prepared for him
 2931 above the fonts, and knelt down on his knees.
 The mass was celebrated by the best,
 most perfect singers, and most solemn rites,
 2934 and with the music of angelic organs.
 [f. 51v] When mass was over, then his lordship turned
 his eyes to the assembled relics there
 2937 of John the Baptist, our most blessed martyr,
 and paid his homage to the limbs that long
 were nourished just by fasting in the desert
 2940 and for the love of God they sought out woe.
 Devoutly he made offerings to them
 and then admired the temple's decorations
 2943 that have no equal in the world, I'm sure.
 He gazed upon the altar, made of silver,
 full of the noblest figures in relief,
 2946 and the great art and mastery within.
 Then the young count, on his pure feet, returned
 to Cosmo's palace, and on the next day
 2949 he left the circle of my city walls
 on horseback, with some noble company
 and rode right to the border of my lands
 2952 until he met the cardinal who has

²⁵ The reliquary bust by Andrea Arditi (1331) is preserved in Santa Maria del Fiore:
<http://www.arnolfofirenze.it/stampa/read.asp>, no. 32.

both chamberlain and patriarch as titles,²⁶
 and each welcomed the other with caresses
 2955 for each was full of love towards the other.
 And then they turned their prow about for Florence,
 the cardinal accompanied by the count,
 2958 to Parione where he had his house.
 That evening, with a similar display,
 the Nicene cardinal came into Florence,
 2961 and made his princely way to Santa Croce.²⁷
 Listen, my son, and you will hear in full
 how the next day, which was the Monday morning,
 2964 a very pleasant outing was arranged
 by Piero to do honour to the great
 [f. 52r] and noble person, lord son of the duke,
 2967 who seems angelic and divine on earth.
 He wants the household moved up to Careggi
 and speaks of offering a splendid banquet
 2970 and everything is done at his expense.
 Pier and Giovanni went up first in person
 and ordered everything so very grandly
 2973 that it would more than suffice a royal king.
 And when it was all ready and in order,
 the count arrived with all those noble lords
 2976 and were received by Piero who came out
 with great rejoicing and with joyful hearts.
 So many courses were brought out to eat
 2979 that people were amazed and stupefied.
 Never before had such a supreme feast
 as this been organized here at Careggi,
 2982 so that the fame of it spreads far and wide.
 We'll never see the equal of this feast,
 2985 but I won't give you all the details here
 so that you do not say that I speak in jest;
 but I will guarantee to you right now
 2988 that when the order for it came from Piero,
 nobody could have asked for any more,
 since he's the one who has supreme control.
 Just bear in mind the peacocks and the sweetmeats
 2991 were just the barest fraction of the whole.
 Throughout this banquet were a thousand treats
 of songs and music, then there was a dance
 2994 of maidens and of beautiful young boys.
 And if you wanted to hear one small part
 [f. 52v] of this festivity, you'd need a poet
 2997 divinely wise, make no mistake in this.

²⁶ Ludovico Scarampi, called Ludovico Trevisan (of Treviso) (1401–1465), patriarch of Aquileia e cardinal chamberlain to four popes; he had commanded the papal forces at the battle of Anghiari, for which the Florentines had given him a palace in Via Parione, formerly the property of Piero di Neri Ardinghelli, often referred to as the “casa del Patriarca.”

²⁷ Basilio (also called Giovanni) Bessarione (1403–1472), cardinal of Nicea.

The wife and lovely daughters of Piero
 and of Giovanni sent for many girls
 3000 to come out to their villa, and they went.
 The count danced first with some, and then with others,
 and he took part in every dance, that great
 3003 and noble count, with all those lovely ladies.
 And were not that men first have to die,
 I'd say that this was paradise, and that
 3006 all people were permitted to reside there.
 After the ball was done, he rode back home,
 the noble guests all followed in his train,
 3009 and went with him as far as the palazzo.
 When they returned, all seemed much entertained
 the female company and conversation:
 3012 one is commended and another praised.
 This very evening there arrived in Florence
 the mighty and most noble cardinal
 3015 of Burgundy, with customary pomp.²⁸
 In Niccolò Uzzano's house he lodged,
 which was quite full of every decoration
 3018 right from the bottom to the very top.
 And this same day the pontiff left Siena
 and stayed in Poggibonsi for the night,
 3021 in his great majesty, most high and holy,
 and he was honoured by those who had come,
 deputized by the city to attend him,
 3024 a crowd made up of citizens and knights.
 In the most Holy Father's company
 [f. 52^{bis}r] were several worthy reverend cardinals;
 3027 each took his place to do him reverence.
 And the next day they all of them set out
 with God's own representative on earth,
 3030 for San Casciano, with the papal household.
 The villa of Giovanni Borromeo was the place
 where the pope stayed,²⁹ the others all were lodged
 3033 according to the citizens in charge.
 And then when the next day dawned bright and clear,
 which was the twenty-fifth that April gave,
 3036 our noble pope set out from San Casciano,
 not stopping till he came to the Certosa,³⁰
 but after pausing there to rest and eat
 3039 they all prepared for entry into Florence.
 In Florence all the people were excited

²⁸ Jean Rolin (1408–1483), bishop of Autun (Lat. *Aeduens*) in Burgundy, titular cardinale di Santo Stefano al Monte Celio. The house of Niccolò da Uzzano, now Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, was completed in about 1426.

²⁹ Villa Borromeo (San Casciano Val di Pesa) was one of the few villas in the district to survive the hurricane of 1456, and regularly welcomed illustrious visitors en route from Siena to Florence.

³⁰ The Certosa del Galluzzo was the Carthusian monastery constructed by Niccolò Acciaiuoli (see n. 3 above), 10 km south of Florence.

3042 by the order my good Lord Priors had given
 to do the pope all honour possible.
 With many lords, the count went out to meet him,
 and most devoutly they all kissed his feet
 3045 with greatest reverence and with all due honour.
 Aeduens and the Greek³¹ went out to greet
 His Holiness, who saves empires and realms
 3048 and all good Christians from the devil's snares.
 The noble Captains of the Parte Guelfa,
 travelled to meet the pope out at San Gaggio
 3051 with the Colleges and a baldachin.
 The Priors gave a wise and solemn order
 to the Rectors and all the citizens
 3054 that they should do full honour to the pope.
 And young and old were given the command
 [f. 52^{bis}v] to go to meet him up at the Certosa,
 3057 in all their finest and most precious clothes.
 The clergy set out too, and this was quite
 remarkable, and in such numbers that
 3060 I can't give you the details in this text,
 with crosses and with relics of the saints
 both men and women, all in reliquaries
 3063 of gold and silver, wondrous to behold.
 And beautiful and gorgeous chasubles
 and copes in such great number I could not
 3066 begin to tell you how many there were.
 All kinds of decoration and of cloth
 were there, rich borders, grand embroidery,
 3069 fine, handsome things, and worth a treasury.
 Then my Lord Priors had given orders that
 more than two hundred boys with torch in hand
 3072 should go with them, and all in livery.
 And with the baldachin, in fine array,
 the Priors, the Colleges and Offices
 3075 went to the gate, as they're required to do,
 from which defensive scaffolding was cleared,
 and the portcullis, leaving it disarmed
 3078 of all its timber beams and weaponry.
 And all the bells of my Florentia
 pealed out in glory with those of the Palace
 3081 and rang all day with great magnificence.
 And if I were to tell you all the tale
 in detail, there is not a living soul
 3084 who wouldn't say it's not just idle boasting.
 Now, to conclude, the pope then took his leave
 [f. 53r] from the Certosa and set out on his horse.
 3087 Down he comes to the convent of San Gaggio
 and meets the Captains of the Parte Guelfa

³¹ Cardinals Rolin and Bessarion.

3090 who one by one and with greatest devotion
 step forward to kiss the pontiff's holy feet.
 One of them says, 'O Holy Father, see
 3093 that we're those Guelfs who always honour you
 in every place, wherever you reside,
 and we have travelled here to honour you
 as you now enter, with this baldachin,
 3096 and to do every honour that we can.
 Nor will our ensign nor our persons ever
 be slow to honour you great Holiness,
 3099 and glorify you with perfect regard.
 We now commend ourselves, most blessed Father,
 to your most holy feet with our devotion.'
 3102 and here the Captain concluded his speech.
 Then the most great and holy Shepherd answered
 and thanked them and accepted all their gifts
 3105 and gave to them his friendship in return,
 and set out underneath their baldachin
 and travelled to the city gate beneath it.
 3108 There he dismounted and changed to the seat.
 The pope was all arrayed in rich brocade
 of gold, and on the *sedia gestatoria*
 3111 wearing his holy mitre on his head,
 the pope was borne half way along the road
 by the lords of Romagna;³² nonetheless
 3114 not one of them complains or tires at all.
 And then the Priors stepped forward to greet the pope
 [f. 53v] with a most reverent gesture of devotion,
 3117 like Gabriel, greeting the Virgin Mary,
 they went down on their knees so they could kiss
 with deep devotion his most holy feet,
 3120 and in return he blessed them joyfully.
 The noble, worthy Standard Bearer said,
 3123 'Most blessed and most holy father Pius,
 whose keys open and close the highest heaven,
 we and our people, with hearts full of joy,
 desire this happy day to come before you
 3126 who stand here with us in the place of God.
 Our city and all that we have around it
 we now commend to you, and offer you
 3129 all in our power, Shepherd fair and dear.
 Such is our pleasure seeing you today
 that tongues could never find the words to say:
 3132 we give to you our bodies, souls and spirits.
 O dear and glorious father, holy Sire,
 after Your Holiness has had a rest
 3135 we'll come to visit you and do your bidding.

³² Gismondo Malatesta, Tiberto Brandolini, Taddeo Manfredi and Astorre II Manfredi carry the *sedia gestatoria* as far as the Porta Romana, after which rotating teams of Florentine citizens carry it to Santa Maria Novella.

His Excellency, Christ's blessed Vicar here
 on earth replied to them, 'We thank you now
 3138 for your humanity, and we accept
 all that you offer, and if you rejoice
 in us, then so our heart rejoices too
 3141 within our breast. And if it happens that
 you come to visit us again, we'll speak
 with greater ease and greater pleasure yet
 3144 and seeing you will always bring delight'.

Thus did the conversation terminate,
 then everyone made ready for the entry,
 3147 all in right order, beautiful, sublime.

First there set out and entered through the gate,
 squeezed tightly two and three and four abreast,
 3150 a thousand horse, if I am not mistaken.

And after them came trumpeters and pipers
 playing as they went in strict formation
 3153 such sweetly lovely music and so rare.

And then came all the worthy citizens
 who had made haste that day to go and meet
 3156 the leader of the apostolic faith.

The Offices and Magistrates were there
 as well, and walked in order, two-by-two,
 3159 in their official dress, and all on foot.

Four citizens on horseback carried four
 vermilion papal hats, an honour that
 3162 the pope had granted them.³³ I'll name them: first
 was Matteo Palmieri, then Antonio
 3165 Ridolfi, and Giovanni Canigiani,
 Giovenco Della Stufa was the fourth.

Then in perfect formation came the banners,
 all made of silk, and square, and they were borne
 3168 by three ambassadors, in their own hands.

One showed the keys of holy Mother Church,
 and in the second was a lovely cross,
 3171 and in the third the papal coat of arms.

Then followed in procession the umbrella
 made all of silk in red and yellow stripes
 3174 and Iacopin Ventura carried it.

Then the holy procession started off,
 with all its relics and its handsome vestments:
 3177 [f. 54v] I think a thousand clerics came and more.

The baldachin of the most noble Guelfs
 covered the very Corpus Domini,
 3180 and all the Captains followed on behind.

Two hundred lighted torches I saw next,
 held in the hands of liveried young boys,
 3183 encircling the holy Trinity.

³³ The traditional papal *camauero*, of red wool or velvet trimmed with ermine, was revived by Benedict XVI in 2005, but not continued by Francis.

And as it passed, all made the signs and gestures
 of humble and devoted adoration
 3186 before the King of heaven and of earth.
 And then before the one whom Jupiter
 left in his place there walked ten cardinals
 3189 who came in homage to the Holy Father.
 And now I'll give their titles for I know
 that you are longing to know who they were.
 3192 This is a list of all these princes' names:
 Rouen, Orsino and Colonna, then
 Bologna, Santi Quattro, the Vice-Chancellor,
 3195 Avignon, and the Greek, and then San Marco,
 and Burgundy.³⁴ And after them, where all
 could see, under the Priors' baldachin,
 3198 riding upon his apostolic *sedia*,
 there came the Holy Father, who was carried
 by many people, hoisted on his chair,
 3201 with every worthy and most excellent honour.
 My Colleges attend the baldachin
 and my Lord Priors, who go on foot beside,
 3204 keeping the Holy Father in the middle.
 Next to the pope the great count walks along,
 a step back on his right hand side, and all
 3207 [f. 55r] most splendidly and handsomely arrayed
 on horseback, so he looks like a new Mars,
 with such stupendous beauty that it would
 3210 take many pages to begin to tell.
 Beside him, Nicodemo³⁵ holds his bridle,
 and after him, ten paces further back,
 3213 comes all the papal court and all his household
 that keep on coming in a endless crowd:
 archbishops, senior protonotaries,
 3216 bishops and prelates, everyone makes haste.
 This train, made up of noble priests and pages,
 their households and much more, came three and four
 3219 abreast, and numbered far more than a thousand.
 And all along the way, people had gathered,
 women and men, who all with devout hearts

³⁴ Guillaume d'Estouteville (1403–1483), bishop Rouen; Latino Orsino (1410–1477); Prospero Colonna (1410–1463); Filippo Calandrini (1403–1476), bishop of Bologna titular cardinal of Santa Susanna; Luis Juan del Milà, cousin of Rodrigo Borgia and titular cardinal of Santi Quattro Incoronati; Rodrigo Borgia, the “vice-cancelliere,” who will become Alexander VI; Alain de Coëtivy, bishop of Avignone and titular cardinal of Santa Prassede; Basilio Bessarione, cardinal of Nicea, called “the Patriarch” and “the Greek” and by Petriboni, “the rich Greek,” in contrast to “the poor Greek,” Cardinal Ludovico Scarampi, not mentioned again here; Pietro Barbo, nephew of Eugenius IV, titular cardinal of San Marco and future pope Paul II; Jean Rolin, bishop of Autun, titular cardinal of Santo Stefano al Monte Celio.

³⁵ Possibly Nicodemo Franchedino; see Jacopo Pitti, *Istoria fiorentina*, a cura di Adriana Mauriello (Naples: Liguori, 2007), p. 41: “Aveva Piero il favore del duca di Milano ed un Nicodemo Franchedino, suo ambasciadore, dimorato assai tempo in Firenze per li favori avuti da Cosimo e anco da lui, lo consigliava, come uomo da stato e da guerra, in tutte quante le cose.” Here, evidently, the Duke of Milan’s ambassador leads the count’s horse.

3222 did reverence to the pope with downcast eyes,
 all of them trusting that with just his finger
 he'll lift the mortal burden of their sin,
 3225 and thus they join their hands in prayer to him.
 On this same evening you've just heard about,
 the pope came to Florentia the flourishing,
 3228 and paid great honour to the handsome count,
 keeping him always close on his right hand,
 this fair, angelic person, great of heart,
 3231 noble and wise and solemn. And this entry
 was truly a great thing to be admired,
 with all magnificence put to the test,
 3234 to glorify our God and all the world.
 In modern times and ancient you'll not find
 so great a thing, that would have been much better
 3237 [f. 55v] but for the rain the skies sent down all day.
 And when the Holy Father at last reached
 Santa Maria del Fiore, he gave thanks
 3240 to Jesus, good and merciful, and had
 himself borne to the beautiful high altar
 all festively adorned beneath the dome,
 3243 and having reached it, there he paused in prayer.
 He venerated San Zanobi's head
 with all the other blessed holy relics
 3246 and then he turned with joy to face the people.
 To raise them from their sins and wickedness
 he gave them all his holy benediction
 3249 and granted to the church a great indulgence.
 Valid for all the pains of purgatory
 was this indulgence, holy and divine,
 3252 for all those who received it with devotion.
 And following this great magnificence
 he left the church and entered San Giovanni,
 3255 and went above the fonts before the altar
 and there in the same way he knelt and prayed
 and gave his blessing and then he left a great
 3258 indulgence for all sinners in this place.
 And having left the baptistery, he had
 to make his way towards Santa Maria
 3261 Novella, all prepared with wondrous things.
 And when the Holy Father had arrived,
 he took his leave of everyone and went
 3264 into his quarters, beautiful and fair.
 At once my good Lord Priors took their leave
 of all the cardinals and of the count
 3267 and all together they went on their way.
 [f. 56r] The cardinals then likewise took their leave.
 The rooms prepared for Cardinal Colonna
 3270 were over in San Iacopo sopr'Arno,
 and Cardinal Orsino went to stay

- with Benedetto degli Alessandri.³⁶
 3273 Avignon went to Sant'Antonio,
 Bologna out to Campo Corbolini,³⁷
 and the Vice-Chancellor stayed with his friends
 3276 whose arms consist of crosses between dolphins.³⁸
 Santi Quattro lodged in Santo Spirito,
 Rouen went to the house of Pierfrancesco,³⁹
 3279 San Marco to the church of Ognissanti.
 The Greek and Burgundy went by and by
 to their accustomed lodgings,⁴⁰ in this way
 3282 this Christian college was lodged with decorum.
 The count and all the other lords there present
 made their way in like manner to their houses
 3285 happy at last to find some time to rest,
 because the program of all these events
 had run from first light until close of day,
 3288 and been so big and bold and beautiful.
 And when the next day dawned, there went at once
 to offer gifts to the most Holy Father
 3291 those people who'd been chosen by the Priors.
 First a great quantity of finest candles,
 together weighing many hundred pounds,
 3294 carried by pages and by servant boys.
 Then in procession came a multitude
 of people bringing torches by the bundle,
 3297 who walked most slowly and contained their gaze.
 [f. 56v] Boxes of tasty sweetmeats in great number,
 of almonds, pine nuts and of caraway,
 3300 sweet pine nut paste and tasty little morsels
 and lots of tarts of marzipan as well,
 huge quantities of flasks of trebbiano,
 3303 and every kind of poultry was there too.
 Arranged magnificently on long poles
 came pigeons, ducks and little yearling calves,
 3306 hares, and wild boar and wild goats from the forest.
 And last among these handsome gifts there came
 a load of every kind of hay, and borne
 3309 by men who each supported two big sacks.
 Don't ask how much the people who were there
 delighted in the great magnificence
 3312 of these presents that stretched along the road.
 And after this they went at once to take
 more presents to the eight cardinal princes
 3315 who had accompanied the Holy Father.

³⁶ Palazzo degli Alessandri in Borgo degli Albizi.

³⁷ Hospital of Sant'Antonio Abate at Porta Faenza.

³⁸ Palazzo Pazzi-Quaratesi in via del Proconsolo.

³⁹ Pierfrancesco di Lorenzo de' Medici, nephew of Cosimo; this is the "casa vecchia" just north of Cosimo's new palace on the Via Larga.

⁴⁰ The Greek (Bessarion) to the Santa Croce (see line 2961), and Burgundy (Rolin) in the house of Niccolò da Uzzano (see line 3016).

And though their presents weren't of the same standard
 as those the pope received, they weren't much less
 3318 because their status is just less than papal.
 And likewise the ambassadors from Siena
 and from Bologna all received great presents,
 3321 showered on them with magnificence.
 And those two cardinals who arrived first
 had been presented, so I am assured,
 3324 on the first day that they appeared among us.
 And just like them, I'd have you understand,
 every important lord and personage
 3327 was given presents in this self-same way.
 [f. 57r] Sigismondo, Astorre and Simonetto,
 Forli, Ottavian, Carlo and Filippo⁴¹
 3330 all received wine, hay, candles, meat and sweetmeats,
 and other things that I won't bore you with,
 but I was there, to see it and to judge,
 3333 all they could they did to honour him.
 They all competed to importune him,
 to bring all possible magnificence,
 3336 to do all honour to the great Visconti.
 Every day there arrived more animals
 both big and small, despatched to us in Florence,
 3339 because throughout the country men were hunting.
 And even though we're meeting all the count's
 expenses every day while he stays here,
 3342 this game is given to him as a present.
 Each gate of Florence puts out on display
 a quantity of fresh-killed game, because
 3345 the order's given to distribute it.
 Now, as the noble custom is, the Priors
 all went to pay a visit to him who
 3348 has power to give darkness or the light
 to those who live, our very Holy Father,
 the universal pastor of the holy Church,
 3351 who can both free and bind each one of us;
 and when they reached him, such was their devotion
 that they remained before him on their knees
 3354 before the divine pontiff's holy feet.
 The pope sat in his *sedia* and around
 on either side he had his cardinals,
 3357 and then the Standard Bearer spoke to him.
 'Holy Shepherd and apostolic Father,
 [f. 57v], whose deeds on earth are those of God in Heaven,
 3360 by virtue of the grace within your mantle,
 we've come to you with that same holy zeal
 that Mary Magdalene felt at the Cross,
 3363 and we'll leave nothing that you wish undone.

⁴¹ See notes 19, 20, 23, and 31 above.

Now let your holy voice give your commands
 and we'll obey you in all purity,
 3366 on earth, at sea and every other place.
 We offer you our people and our city,
 our property and state, with our own heart,
 3369 and set all that we have at your disposal.
 With perfect hearts, all filled with love we do
 commend ourselves to your most holy feet,
 3372 for we are poor lost sheep and you the shepherd.
 We ask you to forgive us, all of us,
 if all yesterday's rain caused us to fail
 3375 to do you all the honour that we should,
 and that Your Holiness surely deserved,
 and that this Signory and all the people
 3378 sincerely wished with all their heart and soul.'
 The Holy Father answered with these words:
 'Gladly do we accept all that you offer,
 3381 and gladly place ourselves at your disposal
 both our own person and all we can do
 for you as good sons of our Holy Church,
 3384 which is exactly how we value you.
 We thank you for the efforts you have made
 to welcome us with such magnificence,
 3387 without sparing the cost in any way.'
 And then he said, 'I know you're all aware
 [f. 58r] of how the Turk, by mountain, plain and sea,
 3390 is threatening both Christ and all his Christians.
 We've had a message sent commanding Christians
 to come to Mantua to meet in council
 3393 and plan for our attack on the cruel dogs.
 Wherefore, be pleased to send there two of your
 ambassadors, with full authority,
 3396 for everything will be decreed right there.'
 And when he'd finished speaking in this way,
 my Standard Bearer spoke, replying thus:
 3399 'It will be done, glorious Holy Father',
 and nothing more was added to these words.
 Then the pope gave them his indulgence,
 3402 and blessed them lovingly and signed the cross.
 And my Lord Priors took their leave of him
 and went back to the beautiful Palazzo
 3405 and to their great and noble residence.
 And the next day, the noble Count Galeazzo
 made his own visit to the Holy Father,
 3408 with greatest joy, and pleasure and delight.
 And he took with him beautiful detachments
 of noble lords and generous gentlemen
 3411 most splendid, with their arms and handsome clothes.
 And when he came before the pope, he knelt
 and there they spoke away from other ears

3414 of many things magnificent and noble.
 I don't know what they were, for they weren't heard,
 and if I do, I'll keep them to myself,
 3417 because it's not for us to know their business.
 But shortly after, one and all could see
 [f. 58v] that the great count departed from the pope
 3420 and went back to the men awaiting him.
 And then at once the noble son of Mars
 mounted his horse, a lovely sight to see,
 3423 and wherever he went they followed him.
 Once home, the count dismounted from his horse
 and those who had been with him took their leave
 3426 and then he went to visit Cosimo
 and Piero, and they spoke of many things
 that I'm not able to repeat to you,
 3429 but, to conclude, he came to the decision
 that on this coming Thursday, and he named
 the day of the Ascension, after lunch
 3432 he would be going on his way from here.
 And when they had decided on this date
 the organizers of the welcome met
 3435 with Piero, and arranged that all the things
 that they'd prepared should be put into action
 without further delay or interval,
 3438 because there was but very little time:
 in two days' time, on Sunday, there's the joust,
 Monday the dance, the next day there's the hunt,
 3441 and then the tournament on Tuesday evening.
 And when the orders for each had been given,
 everyone sets about his given task,
 3444 some to do this and others to do that.
 The day came for the great and fearless jousters,
 to follow in the worthy steps of Mars
 3447 and show their mighty strength upon the field.
 The noble captains of the Parte Guelfa
 [f. 59r] had the prizes brought into the square
 3450 and hung for all to see in two great windows.
 Six people were appointed to be judges.
 The first, the noble Carlo degli Oddi,
 3453 Lessandro Miraballi, messer Manno
 de' Temperani, then the fourth I'll name,
 Carlo, son of Agnol Pandolfini,
 3456 a man versed in the finer points of jousting.
 Tommaso Soderini was the fifth,
 and Niccolò Bonvanni: in their hands
 3459 the judging of those paladins was placed.⁴²

⁴² For Carlo, see n. 23 above; Alessandro Miraballi Piccolomini, *maggiordomo* of Pius II and governor of Frascati; the Florentines Temperani, Pandolfini, Soderini and Bongianni are or will soon be knights. On the judging of four jousts from the 1420s see Giovanni Ciappelli,

The Parte Guelfa also made provision
 for stewards to remain within the lists
 3462 all day and see to everything required.
 All round the lists the finest tapestries
 and rugs hung from the windows on the square
 3465 and on the stands all finely decorated.
 There's never been such handsome preparation
 as this, so finely thought out and arranged,
 3468 nor anything so splendid to behold.
 Erected in the square were the pavilions,
 each with a painted emblem for a joust
 3471 and there he placed the lances he would use.
 Someone was there to measure every one,
 and everybody's lance had to be measured
 3474 so none would take advantage of the other.
 And then when once the city had had dinner
 it seems that everyone went to the joust
 3477 so that the square just seemed to swell with people
 and crowds poured in from every street around,
 and in an hour they'd taken every seat
 3480 [f. 59v] because nobody minded climbing up.
 The houses filled, the windows and the rooves,
 and don't think anyone had any space
 3483 or comfort, because everywhere was packed.
 And all around the outside of the lists
 was full of seats of every kind that covered
 3486 every piece of ground, so everyone
 could see the arts of Mars put to the test,
 and see who showed himself most bold in arms,
 3489 and who was the best skilled in all these arts.
 A hundred thousand people, it was said,
 were there to watch, of every age, both men
 3492 and women, from the cradle to old age.
 Don't think that I'm exaggerating here,
 because there were far more than I have said,
 3495 just take my word for this and be content.
 The Captains of the Parte Guelfa went
 to the enclosure where they'd put the prizes
 3498 to watch the joust from there in every detail.
 The Signory, the Captain and the Provost
 went to their spot, a balcony decked out
 3501 with fine things and a place for them to eat.
 The worthy judges and their notary
 entered their balcony, right in the middle,
 3504 and high up, so they could assess the joust.
 They came with pen and paper and their ink,
 so they could note the blows each joust
 3507 and give the prizes to the finest pair.

"L'arbitraggio di quattro giostre fiorentine nelle imbreviature di un notaio: gli atti di ser
 Bartolomeo da Coiano," *Interpres* 13 (1993): 250–274.

And one house, on the right and half way up,
 right in the middle of this grand piazza
 3510 had tapestries on all its balconies,
 [f. 60r] and had a loggia, which was all enclosed
 by columns in a row, rather than windows,
 3513 protected from the sun and from the shade,
 and to this house the great count rode his horse.
 There he dismounted and went to the roof
 3516 with other people, and with noble lords.
 No sooner was he there than he exclaimed
 to see so many people gathered there
 3519 and crowded in together round the square.
 And in that house, refreshments were arranged
 for supper: many different kinds of fruit,
 3522 and a great quantity of flasks of wine,
 and good vintage trebbiano and all kinds
 and qualities of sweetmeats so that all
 3525 could cool themselves with these refreshing foods.
 And in the anterooms, there could be seen
 resplendent like the crystal of a mirror,
 3528 ladies most fair and beautiful to see.
 The structures for the joust were marvellous,
 festive and splendid, so that everyone
 3531 both young and old came by to look at them.
 And then as this was going on, word came
 that one by one the great jousters were coming.
 3534 Now listen and you'll hear how they came in.
 First with the finest flourish came the trumpets
 that blasted out a fanfare in great voice
 3537 as is the custom for fine warlike deeds.
 And after them, there followed one who rode
 a horse all in caparison, and bore
 3540 a silken banner, blowing in the wind.
 [f. 60v] On the caparison and on the banner
 the emblem of the jouter is displayed,
 3543 both stitched and painted all in gold and silver.
 Before each, twenty pages lead the way,
 all dressed the same and each one with a lance,
 3546 and on each lance is painted this same emblem.
 And since this game of Mars is serious ,
 each man had had his weapon and his armour
 3549 polished so he could see his face in them.
 The next horse followed, its caparison
 all made of velvet, each of its own colour,
 3552 and ridden by a fine and handsome man
 wearing the helmet of the valiant jouter,
 some with their lady's favour on their crest,
 3555 some with a fiction of their heart's true love.
 A great and mighty steed was next, with bards
 and bridle all most grandly decorated,

3558 each with its valiant warrior's coat of arms.
 The barding was the finest, overlaid
 with silken crimson velvet, all embroidered
 3561 with silver thread and pearls. Some even had
 their barding made of silver-weave brocade
 trimmed all around the edge with softest sable,
 3564 as is required for such a great occasion.
 And on this steed the perfect joustler rode,
 with all his shining armour on display,
 3567 and with his shield held up before his breast.
 Around his shoulders each wore a short cloak
 of the same cloth and trimmed with the same sable
 3570 as the caparison worn by his horse.
 [f. 61r] Each joustler was accompanied by thirty
 liveried pages, all in perfect order,
 3573 who walked beside him tending to his needs,
 all in the finest doublets, I declare,
 and in this fashion these most noble joustlers
 3576 entered in triumph worthy of a king.
 Some had their fathers for support, some brothers,
 some had friends, relatives, nephews or uncles,
 3579 for everybody put their hands to this.
 With such joyful magnificence the joustlers
 processed into the square in splendid order
 3582 and made a circuit of it with delight.
 Some laughed, some celebrated, and some jested,
 some one thing, some another, on that day,
 3585 some cooled themselves, and surely not with water.
 And once they'd made their WAY right round the square
 they entered one by one into the lists
 3588 in the same splendid order as before.
 And once the joustlers had made their way in,
 all started practising, some at a trot,
 3591 some at full gallop, some with lance in hand,
 digging their spurs into their horses' sides
 and charging at full speed, out of control,
 3594 as if they were the paladin Orlando.
 One was a Caesar, and another Hector,
 a Scipio, a Carthaginian,
 3597 and none could interpose himself between them.
 An Oliver was there, and too the Dane.⁴³
 now you will understand how noble were
 3600 these joustlers who came out to joust that day.
 Some set their lance at rest and turned to race
 [f. 61v] as swift as arrows, up and down the course,
 3603 raging and roaring and inflicting damage.
 Seven there were in all of these fine knights

⁴³ Orlando, Oliver and Ogier the Dane: paladins of the Carolingian cycle; Hector, son of King Priam of Troy; Scipio and Caesar: Roman generals; Hannibal, ruler of Carthage; respectively *matière de France, de Troie, de Rome* in the popular chivalric romances.

who came to joust so nobly and so proud.
 3606 Their names and noble families are as follows:
 Francesco Benci, Braccio Guicciardini,
 Gregorio Marsuppini, Pier Vespucci,
 3609 Antonio Boscoli, Pier Rinuccini,
 and Count Gherardo with them made the seventh,
 and some were tigers, others were like bears
 3612 that raged most furiously against their foes.
 And when each one had galloped several times
 both up and down, then they all went together
 3615 in one large group to stand before the judges.
 One of the judges stood and spoke to them
 and said, 'Now place your helmets on your heads.
 3618 Follow the orders of most noble Mars
 and go and fight with honour and fair play'
 – and then from the mane up he told them where
 3621 to place their blows – 'if you wish to find honour'.
 At that point all the trumpeters blared forth,
 and sent a fanfare up into the skies
 3624 so that the crowd cried, 'Helmets! Helmets! Helmets!'.
 Each jouster then repaired to his pavilion
 and each soon placed his helmet on his head
 3627 and they arranged themselves, some left, some right.
 It's fast and furious, as they charge and strike
 the first blows at each other, and the blows
 3630 are tallied by the notary to each.
 The mighty lances shatter into bits,
 [f. 62r] wounding the jousters in the chest and arms,
 3633 and two collide together, head to head.
 Some hit the shield and some the shoulder-piece,
 and some strike right into the very rotchet,
 3636 for these are blows that cause the greatest harm.
 No otter ever slipped into a stream
 as fast as these brave paladins that day,
 3639 running against each other with their lances.
 Some strike the glove, and some strike at the throat,
 some on the cheek, and some go for the eyes
 3642 as they attempt to claim the upper hand.
 O glorious and worthy art of Mars,
 The man who is victorious in this place
 3645 is truly worthy of the highest prize.
 And anyone who tries to pass this test
 must help himself and have God's help as well,
 3648 for without this, such honour seldom comes.
 The weapons and the shields take many blows
 because the fighting's fast and furious.
 3651 Some strike the blows and some are struck by them;
 some are avenged, and some are injured more;
 one like a mighty lion, raged on and on
 3654 in front of the great count, Liguria's lord.

One was so proud, as if he ruled the field,
 one gave his horse its head, another galloped,
 3657 one struck cruel blows, another took them hard.
 Crashes and cracks and thumps were heard all round
 as lances shattered into little pieces,
 3660 and men fell side and backwards in the saddle.
 They gave their cruellest blows and got as good
 as they had given, breast and throat and back
 3663 [f. 62v] and even through their visors and their cheeks.
 Just like the fireflies or the butterflies
 we see in June, so tree-trunks filled the air
 3666 and all the ground around, in every place.
 This joust was no less fierce than the one fought
 by Greeks and Trojans centuries ago,
 3669 men who were citizens of warring nations;
 nor was this joust less fierce than those the Romans
 waged in their theatres, where the men would fight
 3672 all day with such ferocity of spirit.
 So, to conclude, the most illustrious jousters
 brought their joust to an end after three hours,
 3675 as warriors most worthy of their fame.
 There were five left, for two had had to leave
 the lists, because they'd suffered injuries.
 3678 And now I want to tell who won the prize.
 The judges to whom this task had been given
 went at once to the Captains of the Parte
 3681 Guelfa, with their register of points.
 And when the Captains had received the names,
 both of the man who'd won the joust and of
 3684 the runner-up, Antonio Boscoli
 received the greater prize, and then they gave
 the second prize to Braccio Guicciardini,
 3687 and each one passed it over to his page.
 Taking their helmets off, they made their way
 right round the lists, and then they went away,
 3690 processing joyously just as they'd come.
 And in the same way, my Lord Priors processed
 with the two Rectors back to their great Palace,
 3693 [f. 63r] and too each Captain of the Parte Guelfa.
 The great Galeazzo mounted on a steed
 and went with those lords back to Cosmo's palace,
 3696 and there he took his leave, and thanked them all.
 And then, without more fuss, he went upstairs
 and to his chamber, where he found, relaxed
 3699 and waiting for him, Cosimo and Piero.
 Much of the talk that evening was about
 the joust, and then they all went off to bed.
 3702 And when the next day dawned, they all got up
 and everybody's full of great delight
 because this is the day they'll have the dance

3705 in the Mercato Nuovo, and already
 it's being prepared. As I've already said
 they've built a fence and scaffolding around
 3708 for seating, all with canopies above.
 They'd nominated citizens to make
 arrangements the program and each last
 3711 detail of the day's great entertainment.
 The worthy man in charge ordered a platform
 where seating was constructed, grand and worthy,
 3714 for the most perfect and illustrious count;
 and from that spot he had spread out before him
 everything the market square contained,
 3717 and all decked out with great magnificence,
 with tapestries on benches and on walls,
 and canopy above of richest cloth,
 3720 as well as all the sides and back and front.
 The platform's floor was covered with rich rugs,
 and all around the seating, rich and regal,
 3723 shimmered resplendent in this joyous scene.
 [f. 63v] The backs and benches were decked out with cloth
 – I know you can imagine for yourself –
 3726 all organized as never seen before:
 three rows of seating for the honoured guests,
 with each one higher than the last, so both
 3729 the one in front and one behind could see.
 It seemed that they had organized the back
 row, just inside the fence, for all the great
 3732 and worthy citizens, and then the next,
 a little lower, for the ladies who
 by reason of their age or advanced state
 3735 or widowhood were not able to dance.
 The front row was especially decorated
 as seating for the women and the girls
 3738 who were to do the dancing in the square.
 And facing this most noble scene, a place
 had been constructed, mounted on the fence,
 3741 for trumpeters and pipers to perform.
 And I can tell you, on my very word,
 that after lunch so many people came
 3744 that all the seats were full within an hour.
 Balconies, rooves and houses with a view
 to see the dance were all engulfed with people,
 3747 with not a single space unoccupied.
 So many people came that I can't guess
 their number to within one or two thousand,
 3750 but twenty thousand was what people said.
 And many more would certainly have come
 if the piazza had been so much bigger,
 3753 but it was small and all completely full.
 [f. 64r] The streets and alleys leading to the square

3756 were full of pushing crowds and people packed
 as tight as sausages that all could savour,
 and I am certain that a millet seed
 could not have fallen to the ground between them
 3759 in all the streets around that sunny square.
 The preparations were as you have heard;
 now listen and you'll hear what happened next,
 3762 although I know you saw it for yourself.
 The citizens went to the highest seats,
 and I have never seen them dressed more grandly
 3765 and more ornately than they were that day.
 Sixty young boys had been assembled there
 to dance, and forty of them were all dressed
 3768 in capes and doublets of finest brocade.
 Never was there seen such magnificence
 as was seen there, with all those silken clothes:
 3771 you must believe the truth of all my words.
 These excellent young boys were full of joy,
 and festive spirit showing in their faces,
 3774 and dressed as is befitting to this joy.
 They were all sons of worthy citizens,
 of noble families and most generous,
 3777 and just as beautiful as divine spirits.
 Among them, they had fifty different garbs,
 embroidered all of them in richest silver
 3780 with tokens of chaste love and noble birth.
 Rays of bright sunlight seemed to shine from them,
 which was a sight quite marvellous to see,
 3783 and all the more now that I think of it;
 [f. 64v] and more than fifty others, all embroidered
 with perfect, matching pearls, big, white and round,
 3786 in the shape of the emblem of each man.
 These lads, so splendid in their manners, changed
 their sumptuous clothes not one but two or three
 3789 times over in the course of that long day.
 All of their clothes were richly lined, with trains
 down to the ground, and all so finely trimmed
 3792 that they'd have honoured emperor or king.
 Their faces were like angels, full of joy,
 and festive laughter and of jubilation,
 3795 as is appropriate in such a place.
 And all of them wore parti-coloured hose,
 embroidered with designs of pearls and silver,
 3798 each in his own exquisite, noble style.
 And so the groups of young men waited there
 like that for all the ladies, who were yet
 3801 to enter any moment in their sweet
 magnificence; and as I stood and watched,
 the pipers and the trumpets and trombones
 3804 went up to their appointed place above.

A group of twenty trumpeters remained
 down at the entrance to the area,
 3807 and as the ladies reached the gate, they stood
 and with a mighty fanfare greeted them.
 The young men then stepped forward to greet them all
 3810 and made their bows with ornate elegance,
 and then escorted them around the market
 and to their seats, the dancers first in front
 3813 and then the others in the row behind.
 [f. 65r] And all the ladies, splendid and sublime,
 who'd been required to come there on that day,
 3816 took a good hour to come, you can imagine,
 because they came in groups of four or six,
 or eight or ten, and ceremoniously
 3819 they took their places in the seats prepared.
 A group of women came from Piero's house,
 wives and sisters-in-law and relatives
 3822 and daughters, more than fifty, in all truth.
 Illustrious, fair, and lovely as the sun,
 they came into the square and were all taken
 3825 to their appointed places to be seated.
 The first row, for the girls and married women,
 was full from end to end, right round the square
 3828 and even the most ugly were fair stars.
 And then there were a hundred matrons, all
 adorned with wonderful magnificence
 3831 that I cannot find strength to tell it all.
 That day each woman wore golden brocade
 made up into a dress or to a cloak,
 3834 or into sleeves or to some other garment.
 There was no garment there without brocade
 inside or out, and some had brocade both
 3837 inside and out. And on that day brocade
 was reduced just to lining, and three yards
 or more of it were dragged along the ground
 3840 as if it were no more than an old rag.
 Brocade was used in borders and for veils,
 and some had little cloaks, and some had hoods,
 3843 and some used it as edging all around.
 There was a great abundance of fine clothes,
 [f. 65v] all encrusted with pearls, and gold and silver
 3846 that shone like suns at every time of day
 for the great craftsmanship that they contained,
 and for the weight of beautiful rich pearls,
 3849 that stun me still just to remember them.
 The ladies and the damsels one and all
 came with their hair all shining and aglow
 3852 combed into different, lovely head-dresses.
 Their hair is done in many different styles:
 tresses and bunches and the fairest curls,

3855 all done with great attention and with care.
 Some of them have their hair beneath a *balzo*,⁴⁴
 others have hats or spiral caps or combs,
 3858 *mazzocchi*,⁴⁵ garlands, padded horns, or hoods.
 And sewn on to all these head-dresses
 I saw with my own eyes so many pearls
 3861 that they appeared to have been caught by hail.
 Around their necks and on their heads and breasts
 they all wore chains and necklaces and pins
 3864 and clasps with richest jewels all set in gold.
 No one who set his eyes upon them could
 fail to be dazzled, for they are quite full
 3867 of precious jewels and finest cameos:
 rubies and turquoises and emeralds,
 sapphires and diamonds, balasses, topaz,
 3870 all fine and precious, rich and genuine.
 I shall not mention here all the fine velvets
 and velveteens, of high pile and of low,
 3873 for I could not begin to name them all.
 Nor do I know the names of all the furs –
 [f. 66r] the marten, sable, civet, miniver,
 3876 and noble ermine – to recite them all,
 for there were many hundred times a hundred
 pelts of every kind that you have heard,
 3879 among the furs adorning those fine ladies.
 That was a day to sate one's appetite
 for staring at fine ladies and fine things,
 3882 and looking over them in all their detail.
 And so the lovely ladies took their place
 and sat together all in the front row,
 3885 a lovely mix of maidens and young wives.
 My great Lord Priors came to a house nearby
 with balconies adorned with tapestries
 3888 and rugs, and watched from there, so I believe.
 Now for the climax: the illustrious count
 arrived at last at the perimeter
 3891 with all his noble lords and champions,
 and every trumpeter took up his trumpet
 and blasted forth a long and willing fanfare
 3894 until the count had made his entry there.
 And as he entered, all the noble pages,
 handsome young men, most excellently adorned,
 3897 went forward to greet this warrior of Mars.
 With all the deference due, and finest bows,
 they went with him towards the dais where
 3900 he and his paladins would sit and watch.

⁴⁴ Head-dress consisting of a high structure of wicker-work covered with precious fabric or by hair.

⁴⁵ Head-dress consisting of a padded ring covered with precious fabric and decorated with ribbons and other ornaments.

And as he went, the ladies all stood up
 and curtsyed very nearly to the ground
 3903 in honour of this noble personage.
 The great lord count, most worthy of a crown,
 removed his hat and then returned their greeting
 3906 with a deep bow, as reverent as can be.
 [f. 66v] And when he reached the seats prepared for him
 he took his place at once, and from that spot
 3909 he had a view of everything that happened.
 Don't ask whether he was amazed to see
 the ladies all so elegantly dressed
 3912 and how much praise he lavished on their beauty.
 His lords and all his retinue had gone
 to take their seats up on the platform, where
 3915 each one was placed according to his rank,
 and all kept their eyes fixed on the sweet faces
 of those fair ladies filled with great delight
 3918 that looked like angels sent from paradise.
 Meanwhile the pipers and the trumpeters
 began to play a happy *salterello*,
 3921 infused with art and perfect measure too.
 Then all the noble pages, light of foot,
 step forward, one takes a matron, one a maid,
 3924 and they begin to dance alternately.
 Some walk around, some skip, and some change hands
 some part and some invite, and other then
 3927 do lovely dances with two parts or three.
 Two fair young maids, united in desire
 for nobleness and with a smiling brow,
 3930 and rosy and resplendent cheeks approached
 and asked the noble count if he would dance,
 curtsying low before him, to the ground,
 3933 with willing and most charming reverence.
 The noble warrior rose to his feet,
 returned their bow, and then he took the floor
 3936 and there he danced, and danced quite faultlessly.
 And while the count was dancing with them there,
 [f. 67r] the others, men and women, all stood up
 3939 and bowed to him whenever he passed by.
 And when he'd danced the noble *Pellegrina*,
 the ladies led him back to where he sat,
 3942 employing all they'd learned to do him honour.
 The count remained there but a little while
 before he stood, inviting two young ladies
 3945 and bringing fiery blushes to their cheeks.
 But each of them did him most worthy honour:
 setting him in between they danced with him,
 3948 and as they moved around the crowd stood up.
 And then the others danced in this strict order:
 Messer Tiberto and the other lords,

3951 and each set in between two fairest ladies.
 You do not need to ask if they were glad
 and if they took their eyes off those fair maids
 3954 whom they saw doing them so many honours.
 A roundel dance in heaven it did seem
 and those who danced were like angelic choirs,
 3957 with each one full of laughter and of joy.
 All creatures in creation leap for joy
 before the triumph of the noble limbs
 3960 of her to whom the shepherd gave the ball.
 It all looked like a heaven made of roses
 in which the count represents a sun,
 3963 the women and young men the shining stars.
 There reigns enjoyment to each heart's content
 beneath banners, fiery, glorious,
 3966 of mighty Cupid with his biform child.
 These mighty and most worthy ladies seemed
 that day to spark a thousand fires without
 3969 [f. 67v] a flint or striker, wood or sulphur.
 That day fair Venus brought out all her games
 and all could celebrate with gallantry
 3972 and with no fear that they would come to harm.
 Some dance, some take their leisure, and some jest,
 and some are gazed upon, and some do stare,
 3975 and some are flirted with and some do flirt.
 That day a fuse was lit that would explode
 in such a way that not a breast was spared
 3978 from the great flames of love within its heart.
 If paradise is the home of delight
 then we can find a paradise on earth,
 3981 and paradise is what I have described.
 This dance had lasted one whole hour already
 and in that time Love tied more than one knot,
 3984 when preparations started for the supper,
 and now it is my will to tell you all
 about the order and how it was done,
 3987 without a word of lie, I promise you.
 The very first thing that we saw arrive
 was trumpeters who went around the square
 3990 with a great fanfare; after them there came
 four serving men, with each one carrying
 a heavy silver basin in his hands;
 3993 and after them there followed in a line
 another twenty dishes, each one full
 of crystal glasses, beautifully washed.
 3996 And then there followed thirty men and each
 bore in his hands two jugs of gilded silver
 filled with the sweetest and the purest water,
 3999 and these things were all set up one by one.
 [f. 68r] Then, in most perfect order, came the wines,

amabile so sweet and fine trebbiano,
 4002 and fifty men who bore a hundred flasks,
 one in each hand, and carried high aloft,
 and so they came in once continuous line,
 4005 with all restraint and at a steady pace.
 Then forty young men who'd been dancers came
 with gilded silver boxes, full of sweetmeats,
 4008 that sparkled in the light like clearest crystal,
 and these they carried with their hands held high,
 all forty of them full of pastry morsels
 4011 and of pine nut marzipan and candied pumpkin,
 on top of snakes and lions⁴⁶ made out of candy,
 and all done true to life and with great skill,
 4014 by the most perfect and experienced cooks.
 And in this way, sublime and regal too,
 they made their way around the market square,
 4017 evenly spaced, the one behind the other.
 Then on one side the trumpeters blared forth
 as all the trays were set down in the middle.
 4020 The young men came and took the crystal glasses.
 Some pour the wine, and some are given water
 that's offered to the ladies and the others,
 4023 and for the sweetmeats, each one helps himself.
 Two maidens, of such beauty that they dazzled
 just like a solar sphere, rose to their feet
 4026 and went to where the noble count was sitting.
 They came before him and they curtsied low,
 and did him worthy reverence as befits,
 4029 such honest and well-mannered gentlewomen.
 And then, with great magnificence, they took
 [f. 68v] the wine and sweetmeats, and in view of all
 4032 they touched them and they tasted them for him.
 The count reached out and with his hand he took
 sweetmeats and wine from these incarnate roses
 4035 thanking them both for their most courteous act.
 The charming and angelic gentlewomen
 bowed deeply and then left him to return
 4038 each one to sit in her appointed place.
 When all had had their fill of this repast,
 the flasks of wine and sweetmeats that remained
 4041 were cast into the crowd for all to seize.
 The supper-crew then carried all the silver
 and every other thing out of the square
 4044 back to the place appointed for each thing.
 The finely dressed young gentlemen returned
 in grand new clothes, rich and magnificent,
 4047 and in the meantime all the pipers played.
 When they heard this, each squire came forward to take

⁴⁶ The *biscione* serpent and the *marzocco* lion, symbols of Milan and Florence respectively.

a matron or a maiden by the hand
 4050 because each one of them wishes to dance.
 And so the dancing starts with grand display,
 such that all those who've come to see or hear
 4053 are marvellously filled with admiration.
 The great, most excellent count danced several times
 with ladies who looked just like little angels
 4056 who went and asked him and whom he accepted.
 Sometimes it was the count who did invite
 young girls that glistened just like morning stars,
 4059 and then he went amid them all to dance.
 The other lords and nobles of his court
 invited ladies, and were asked themselves
 4062 [f. 69r] by gentlewomen who were just like queens.
 The young men, noble, worthy and adorned,
 as swift and light upon their feet as birds,
 4065 accompanied the ladies as they danced.
 And having danced awhile the *saltarello*,
 they then went on to other different dances
 4068 at the request of one or other person.
 They did the *Chirintana*, most ornate,
 and then they danced *Arrosti* one and two,
 4071 and *Laura* and the *Masks* and *Carbonata*,
 and *Lioncello*, *Hope* and *Belriguardo*,
 the *King's Dance*, and the *Pretty Angiola*,
 4074 and many more that I cannot name here.⁴⁷
 But I would have you look closely yourself,
 for everything that anybody knew
 4077 was great and worthy was done there that day,
 and anything magnificent or fitting
 that was not done owed its omission to
 4080 the fact it wasn't possible or known.
 And, to conclude, they danced another hour
 and then set out another splendid supper
 4083 just as before, and even grander still,
 because it was served in the same strict order,
 but after they had brought the forty boxes
 4086 all full of the confections named before,

⁴⁷ Besides the well-known (and generic) *saltarello*, the following can perhaps be identified: *Chirintana*, *Spero* and *Danza del Re*, attributed to Guglielmo Ebreo (Siena, BCI, L.v.29); *Leoncello* and *Belriguardo*, attributed to Domenico da Piacenza (Paris, BN, MS Ital. 972); *Rostiboli Gioioso*, a dance created by Domenico da Piacenza (Siena, BCI, L.v.29); *Angiola*, attributed to Antonio Cornazzano (Siena, BCI, L.v.29); see www.rendancedb.org. The "danza peregrina" that Galeazzo performed with two ladies (v. 3940) could be the *Pellegrina*; while "amendue gli arrosti" (the two 'roasts') are perhaps to be associated with *Rostiboli Gioioso*, a dance created by Domenico da Piacenza (Siena, BCI, L.v.29); see Judith Bryce, "Performing for Strangers: Women, Dance and Music in Quattrocento Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 1074-1107, esp. p. 1080, n. 18, citing A. William Smith, ed. and trans., *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza*, 2 vols. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995); and Jennifer Nevile, *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), with translation by Giovanni Carsaniga of ff. 63r-69v, pp. 141-157.

then they bore in four gilded wicker hampers
 carried aloft by pages, groaning neath
 4089 the weight of pine nut cakes, I do believe.
 People were there to fill and empty glasses,
 to offer people sweetmeats and to take them,
 4092 and this they did in every street around.
 [f. 69v] Just as before and with magnificence
 two gentlewomen of delightful mien
 4095 came to the count to taste his food and wine.
 The young men with the baskets charged around
 and threw the sweetmeats in them here and there
 4098 to all the crowd that gave a roaring cheer.
 They're thrown up to balconies and windows
 and to the men and women on the rooves
 4101 until the hampers are completely empty.
 And every single flask that was left over
 was tossed about the place in a great storm
 4104 and everybody had the grandest feast.
 So ended the magnificent delight
 of this most noble dance that gave such joy
 4107 that never was there anything like this.
 My good Lord Priors went back to the great Palace,
 the gentlewomen returned to their homes,
 4110 accompanied by the young gentlemen.
 The splendid count, duly magnificent,
 accompanied by all his noble lords,
 4113 went to the palace with the lovely garden,
 and once there, took his leave of everyone.
 That evening they all dined most festively
 4116 and each one talked of nothing but the dance.
 The next day dawned, the day for which they'd planned
 the lion hunt bold and brave within the square
 4119 in front of the Palazzo de' Priori.
 When he had eaten, then the noble count
 went with his lords and other gentlemen
 4122 to the great Palace of my noble Priors,
 and there his noble and most lordly person
 [f. 70r] was received with all congratulations
 4125 by the members of my magistracy.
 Then they all took their places in the hall
 at decorated balconies to see
 4128 the great ferocity of the wild lions.
 So many people had assembled there
 of every sex and every generation
 4131 that I'd not be believed if I described it.
 The walls and rooves and balconies of all
 the houses all around and close at hand
 4134 were packed quite full of people pressed together.
 I could not start to count or quantify
 the crowd that made its way into the seating

4137 but it was filled with all that it could hold.
 Some found their places early, good for them,
 because there was much jostling for space,
 4140 with the crowd surging like a ship at sea.
 Here was a way of curing gout perhaps,
 or getting trampled underfoot, or squashed,
 4143 and make up for idly wasted time.
 In one part of the square they put the great
 ‘giraffe’ and a round ball so they could move
 4146 among the lions with all impunity.
 And in the ball, it seems, there hides a man
 who rolls the ball wherever he decides
 4149 and pokes the lions along from all directions.
 The great ‘giraffe’ is borne by twenty lads
 whose happy job it is to be inside
 4152 the body, so he can annoy the lions.
 When places had been found for all these things,
 the piazza was then cleared on every side
 4155 [f. 70v] except for all the animals within:
 namely the wolves and boars, bull buffalos,
 two horses, still unbroken and quite mean,
 4158 and cows with calves at foot and with their bulls.
 And then they sent in twelve Corsican mastiffs,
 savage great dogs that did not hesitate
 4161 to set upon the animals at once.
 You do not need to ask about the noise,
 for if the world had been turned upside down
 4164 nobody there would have heard anything.
 Some of the dogs ran one way, some another,
 some attacked wolves, and some the bulls and horses,
 4167 and some, as I recall, attacked the boar.
 Everyone saw the battles waged between them,
 and dogs that ran and leapt and threw themselves
 4170 about, and dogs that made their teeth all bloody.
 Then suddenly the gate was opened to
 admit the fiercest species, the great lions
 4173 and four of them came roaring to the square.
 And each of them came up towards the dogs,
 but they kept barking and stood far away,
 4176 and none of them broke off to challenge them.
 The great lions took a stroll around the square,
 with all their haughty pride on full display.
 4179 The rest just stood there trembling with fear.
 And then, with a great leap, both high and agile,
 the great *marzocco* set upon a horse,
 4182 and showed it was the emperor of beasts.
 It sank its teeth between the back and body,
 and you don’t need to ask if the horse felt
 4185 the wound, because it spun around at once.
 [f. 71r] And up and down the square it ran, and kicked

4188 the lion quite savagely and bit it too,
 but it despite, it all, did not lose interest.
 And after going back and forth so many
 4191 times, the fierce lion, in the end,
 decided to attack the horse and opened
 its mouth quite suddenly and took a piece
 4194 out of the horse, and left a gaping hole
 that could have held a hoard of buried treasure.
 The lion looked like a girl as it strolled round
 with all its friends across the square and back
 4197 and then in front of the most noble count.
 And once they'd shown their beastliness, I think
 it was God's will that they should also show
 4200 their great humanity to the young count;
 because I want to tell you, my dear son,
 that they refused to show again that day
 4203 their fury: this must be a pious act.
 In ancient times or new, there's no report
 that lions have behaved as on that day:
 4206 such novelties must be the work of God.
 You can be sure that the giraffe and ball
 went over to torment him several times,
 4209 but his humility was not perturbed.
 The fierceness of the lion is known to all,
 but no one knows its great humility,
 4212 and God chose to reveal it on that day
 when by his will he made a man come down
 from in the stands and walk among the lions,
 4215 to the amazement of the watching crowd.
 But when they saw the lion did not attack,
 [f. 71v] many of them were reassured and then
 4218 they all came down and walked about the ring.
 And in the space of less than half an hour
 a great fierce lion, still at large, did find
 4221 itself surrounded by ten thousand people,
 and it showed such humanity that day
 before the count and members of his court;
 4224 and all the people gathered round about,
 and came up to it just to feel its fur
 and touch it on the feet and on the tail:
 4227 now you can see how marvellous this was!
 And it would seem that it enjoyed the things
 they did, and put its tongue right out to lick
 4230 them all, and wagged its tail in great delight.
 You can indeed be sure that this amazed
 the noble count, when he observed this act
 4233 so humble, in a beast that's rarely so.
 And if you want a gloss on this report
 I'd say I think that God inspired it all."
 4236 I said, "Indeed!" And she continued then:

“That heavenly-inspired and mighty lion
 has shown the count how valiant he is
 4239 and how it humbly bows before him now.
 It’s done this out of reverent respect
 for the most faithful friendship that we share
 4242 with the triumphant banner of the duke.
 My people can be told, the young and old,
 women and men – of this we can be sure –,
 4245 that duke and count love us, as we love them,
 and this love comes reflected by the mirrors
 of heaven’s glory and great excellence
 4248 [f. 72r] where roses grow without the pain of thorns.
 If animals that are born fierce of pelt
 show love, what should you do when you are born
 4251 with intellect and reason forged in love.
 My Florentines, if you will willingly
 hold dear both duke and count with open heart,
 4254 you will be loved by them for evermore,
 for it has been determined in the face
 of our almighty God that he who loves
 4257 is loved. So let the fount of love be filled
 by all: such love will be the noble bough
 which will maintain both them and you in triumph,
 4260 and you and them enshrined in glory’s fame.
 And, to conclude, that lion then walked away
 and went at once to where the other lions
 4263 were waiting, if you can imagine them.
 The noble count then took his leave from all
 my Priors and made his way back to the palace
 4266 with the great retinue that I’ve described.
 They dined with Galeazzo one and all,
 and waited for the jousting⁴⁸ afterwards
 4269 that was to be performed with festive joy
 along the Via Larga, by the palace,
 where sand now covered all the street below
 4272 so that none ran the risk of accident.
 When the great banquet ended, the fair count
 with all his lords went over to the windows,
 4275 accompanied by Piero and the rest.
 And when he got there, looking out he saw
 such a great crowd of people that he was
 4278 quite overwhelmed at all that he beheld.
 [f. 72v] First he saw citizens on horseback who
 were making sure that everything went smoothly,
 4281 and that as one man finished, the next started.
 All along the street there could be seen

⁴⁸ This joust (*armeggeria*) is a display of arms by adolescents and young men rather than a joust in the lists by adult males. It involves display, and tilting with lances at the quintain (*chintana*), an armoured dummy mounted on a pole, which if struck badly would swing round and strike the tilter.

4284 a multitude of torches in the holders,
 giving illumination to the block.
 As well there could be seen the pleasant sight,
 every three yards or so, of bonfires made
 4287 of sticks, and in addition at the windows
 of the grand palace where the young count was
 many great waxen tapers, all alight,
 4290 that had been placed on all the candle spikes.
 And while these things were all being put in place,
 at the great Sapienza⁴⁹ there assembled
 4293 all that was needed. Listen to it all.
 Twelve jousters came and took their places there
 on twelve most beautiful and handsome steeds
 4296 that were caparisoned right to the hilt,
 with cloths all trimmed with fringes and with slashes,
 rich, noble and adorned, worthy and grand,
 4299 with sets of tiny tinkling silver bells;
 and all of them were dressed in little doublets,
 made for the most part of silver brocade,
 4302 and all the others that could be seen there
 were stitched with pearls and silver thread to match,
 their party-coloured hose all stitched with pearls;
 4305 and they stood in their stirrups all erect.
 These were amazing wonders to behold,
 and each held in his hand a lovely dart
 4308 on which each man had painted his love's token.
 [f. 73r] The one who led the way was called Andrea,
 a youth with all the skills and all the craft
 4311 of this most proud and noble kind of jousting.
 And Maso Pucci, Lorenzo Neroni,
 Domenico and Piero della Luna,
 4314 Giovanni Portinari, Matteo Boni
 and Iacopin Venturi: all were there
 for this event, and with them all adorned
 4317 Averardo de' Medici came too.
 Giovanni and Renato of the Pazzi
 were there, and well turned out, to tell the truth,
 4320 for this most grand and noble demonstration.
 And last was Lorenzino di Piero,
 so well adorned with more magnificence
 4323 than any emperor could have displayed.
 He was surrounded by twelve mighty horses,
 and on each one there rode a noble boy
 4326 with finest clothes and fine caparisons.
 And to the jousters then Lorenzo spoke,
 'Each come and choose one of these pages here
 4329 and make him ride before you for each throw'.
 There was, moreover, a great charger there

⁴⁹ The Florentine *studium* in Via dello Studio 1, on the southern side of the *duomo*.

4332 on which there sat a man both strong and skilled,
 caparisoned in silk, he and the horse,
 and in his hand he held a silken banner
 bearing an emblem in red, white and green,
 4335 and he had a benevolent appearance.

This emblem was remarkable in form:
 a gold falcon volant was in the middle,
 4338 caught underneath a net, and all composed
 with great decorum and magnificence
 [f. 73v] by the hand of a great and skilful master,
 4341 and worked with needle and with brush so that
 its feathers were completely done in gold,
 and you can be assured that Lorenzino
 4344 had chosen this as his insignia.

And his the caparison bore the same sign
 as did the cloak he carried in his hand
 4347 like one who was experienced in this game.

And the same sign is on the clothes and all
 the trappings of his pages' horses too.
 4350 Now you can see how royal Lorenzo is.

The jousters in their perfect splendour came,
 each with the page who'd been given to him,
 4353 and rode along beside him, I recall.

And each of them had taken care to have
 a group of twenty strong, young lads around,
 4356 dressed in his livery to do his bidding,
 dressed in the finest doublets all of them.
 They draw themselves into formation round
 4359 the joustier and his page upon their steeds.

And then they have another twenty, each
 with a great waxen taper in his hand,
 4362 to light the way as they move swiftly on.

And, so that you can visualise it all,
 another fifty lads all full of joy
 4365 were there as well, around the mighty triumph,
 torches in hand, and in the livery
 of the most noble, splendid Lorenzino,
 4368 who has as many, likewise dressed, around him.

And when they'd all moved into their positions,
 [f. 74r] the Triumph came out of the Sapienza,
 4371 nobler than anything yet seen before.

And if you're patient, I will tell you all
 (just stay awake, and listen to me well)
 4374 this Triumph's great magnificence.

The triumph was constructed in this way.
 It had four sides, each one of which was tapered
 4377 towards the top, in perfect symmetry.

It rested on four wheels, and each of these
 was balanced perfectly so it could roll,
 4380 and when one turned it turned the rest as well.

And now I will describe to you the beauty
 of the compositions on each face,
 4383 and how splendid and worthy it all was.
 Each side measures five *braccia* to the top,
 and is adorned with so much decoration
 4386 that it would seem impossible to do.
 There's silverwork and gold, and such enamel
 and crystal glass that if you looked at it
 4389 you see yourself reflected in the glass.
 It shines just like the sun into the darkness,
 and mounted on its corners at the top
 4392 it has four truly wondrous little sprites.
 And in the middle sit three diamond rings
 that on their tips support a golden ball,
 4395 and all the diamond rings are golden too.
 The sprites all float, rejoicing festively,
 and each has in its hand a burning torch,
 4398 and they are naked, wings sprout from their backs.
 The torch was covered with fine silvery scales
 and cast its light most brightly all around,
 4401 and mark my words, the fire and flame were real.
 [f. 74v] And on all sides the triumph was alight
 with so much fire and flame that the most noble
 4404 of the four elements would seem but small.
 He to whom Venus is a loving mother
 stood on the summit of the golden ball,
 4407 perfectly motionless. Over his eyes
 a blindfold, in his hand a bow, a quiver
 down by his side, and thus he stands there, cruel
 4410 and inhumane, using his feet the while,
 with two great wings, and all his body naked.
 He is the one who flies around the world
 4413 to play his games, so bitter-sweet, on all.
 He is the one whose followers must ever
 find their hearts full of arrows, and their breasts.
 4416 He is the one who captures hearts once free.
 He is the one who subjugates the world
 and Cupid is the name of this great lord.
 4419 And that is what this mighty triumph was.
 As it came out, a deafening roar rang out
 and up to the ninth heaven rang the shout:
 4422 'Now, let us go, let's go and see the count!'
 And anyone who saw these wondrous things,
 resplendent and bedecked with little lamps,
 4425 would have regarded them as miracles
 no less than I myself, for I perceived
 that heaven must be made in this same way
 4428 and that the angels had descended here.
 Thirty trumpeters festively went forth
 accompanied by pipers, and they played

4431 as they processed in couples two by two.
 The banner followed, blowing in the wind,
 [f. 75r] and sparkling as if it were the sun,
 4434 like both its bearer and the one who followed.
 After the banner there followed a page
 and after him a mighty joustier came
 4437 and all the others followed on behind.
 Each joustier seemed a great and worthy lord:
 with pomp and with nobility they go,
 4440 each rider with his pages all around.
 The men bearing the torches form a line
 and stand along the street on either side
 4443 to shine a light for all the joustiers there.
 Each joustier had a garland or a wreath
 of lovely silver scales, each one adorned
 4446 with golden feathers that all stood erect,
 to decorate the helmet on his head,
 and every joustier's helmet shone more bright
 4449 and radiant than any star in heaven.
 Each person in this great and noble group
 rode standing in his stirrups. Just imagine
 4452 how glorious this sight was to behold!
 They followed on with one behind the other
 until each one of them had passed, and each
 4455 delighting and most surely filled with joy.
 The last one to come by was Lorenzino,
 standing up in his stirrups, fair and noble,
 4458 with the air of a divine *spiritello*,
 astride a beautiful and noble steed
 that whinnies as it paws the ground and skitters;
 4461 and in his cloak, made of the purest ermine,
 he is not troubled by his youthfulness,
 but rather finds his heart and limbs inspired
 4464 [f. 75v] to honour the great Seigneur of the serpents.
 Behind him come the horses without bridles,
 that draw the noble and triumphal car
 4467 with liveried and caparisoned pages.
 Cupid's on top and seem aroused to ire
 although he's fair and noble in his body,
 4470 and things proceeded as I'll tell you now.
 Into the Via Larga, wide and grand,
 they entered from San Marco, full of joy,
 4473 on that first day that followed April's end.
 And as they passed the palace fine and grand,
 they turned with all due reverence towards
 4476 the balconies where Galeazzo stood.
 The noble count, filled with the greatest joy,
 could not hold still but scurried up and down
 4479 to look at everything with joyful soul.
 One thing amazes, one's a miracle,

one he finds noble and another rich,
 4482 and so he touched on everything with praise.
 And as the jousters pass he doesn't take
 his eyes from them, so noble and so fine,
 4485 and then he catches sight of Lorenzino,
 whose fair and noble form has just appeared
 and with due reverence bows to the count,
 4488 uncovering his curls for him to see.
 What followed then was all that with great wit
 and great expense and discipline and skill
 4491 and knowledge too had been prepared for him.
 This is the triumph, full of sparks and fire,
 that makes those who submit to his control
 4494 a thousand times a day both glad and sad.
 [f. 76r] The count turned round to look and think on this,
 and saw it so delightfully adorned
 4497 that he stood in amazement, without words.
 And to those gathered round him the count said,
 'This is indeed a marvellous creation.
 4500 There's never been a more resplendent sight.'
 And then those horses, still without their bridles,
 follow behind the jousters with the car
 4503 right down to San Giovanni where they turn
 and look back at the count who's filled with joy.
 The noble triumph then returned and stopped,
 4506 leaving the jousters waiting in the square.
 Then I saw all the people, each with torch
 afire, arrange themselves on either side
 4509 along the street, a channel in-between.
 And in the meantime one by one we saw
 the jousters, who rode standing in their stirrups
 4512 and charged back into view, like noble knights
 most bold of heart, invincible and true,
 who whirled their lances boldly the air
 4515 while seeming to be anchored in the saddle –
 and Roland in his fury did not rush
 in hot pursuit of Almont through the gorge
 4518 as fast as they did, coming up the street –
 and then paid their homage to the count
 and went in order back to San Giovanni
 4521 where they turned round again to face the street.
 At the door of Piero's house they'd placed
 upon a wooden horse a fine young man
 4524 dressed in the finest suit of shining armour,
 holding a splendid shield before his breast.
 [f. 76v] His body was turned sideways to the jousters,
 4527 his face was covered by a shining helmet.
 Each jouster took a lance all stout and green
 and full of knots and gnarls so he could give
 4530 the armoured quintain its deserts that evening.

And, as the custom is, they charged full force
 each following the last to strike a fierce
 4533 and solid blow upon the quintain's shield.
 Bravely each lance is shattered so that trunks
 fly up and travel through the air to land
 4536 on rooftops round about, and the shield splits.
 O my dear son, think and imagine now
 the sound of bridle bells, the roar of trumpets,
 4539 when they charged down, both now and before too.
 All the conditions and all the effects
 of that great joust, my dearest son, you've heard
 4542 recounted in the words that I have spoken.
 And in that same sublime and excellent order
 in which the jousts and the triumph came,
 4545 so too they left, and then the noble count
 departed from the balconies with all
 the others, and with festive jubilation
 4548 and joyful happiness in every heart.
 Each one desired to go and find Lorenzo
 to thank him for the joust that he had staged
 4551 and paid for from his very own allowance.
 And after some congratulation, all
 went off to bed and when the next day dawned
 4554 the count and all his retinue had lunch
 and then without delay they went together
 to the great convent of Santa Maria
 4557 [f. 77r] Novella, where the pope recited vespers
 with the cardinals at the High Altar,
 and at the end, the Seigneur of Forli
 4560 was made a knight with finest ceremony.
 Then the pope left, and all the others there
 went with him, and the cardinals then took
 4563 their leave and each went back to where he lodged.
 The count returned to the magnificence
 of Cosimo and Piero in their palace,
 4566 and my Lord Priors returned to their Palazzo.
 Just as the count was resting at his ease,
 servants arrived who'd been sent by the Priors.
 4569 'Lord count,' they said, 'may God give you protection.
 It is the wish of our great, mighty Priors
 to make a present to your excellency
 4572 of silverware, rejoicing in their hearts,
 and they beseech you in your gentleness
 to look not at the gift but at the giver
 4575 who sends it with great sweetness and with love.
 They know they should have found a richer gift
 and one more truly marvellous to give you,
 4578 and for this reason each one begs your pardon,
 knowing that God found more acceptable
 within his heart a turtledove than all

4581 a multitude of gifts so rich and precious.
 Therefore they say to you, most noble lord,
 that you, your father and your mother and
 4584 your state are loved by every Florentine'.
 The good count showed himself to be much pleased
 and gave his heartfelt thanks to my Lord Priors
 4587 and all our people for the gift they'd given.
 [f. 77v] Then all the servants took their leave of him.
 Now, for your pleasure, I will tell you what
 4590 the Commune sent as gifts to the great count:
 a dozen cups, large and magnificent,
 worked by Parisian craftsmen in ornate
 4593 designs, finer than any ever seen,
 and two great sweetmeat dishes of fine silver,
 with two great lids, as reason would dictate;
 4596 and two great jugs with two great matching basins,
 that dazzle like the rays of a bright sun.
 And after this our foremost citizens
 4599 offered him presents with the kindest words.
 That day he received gifts of dogs and horses,
 and everybody showed him great affection
 4602 and sorrow at his leaving the next day,
 Ascension Day, that is, when our dear Lord
 Christ Jesus rose to heaven, so he went
 4605 that evening to be present at the play
 that's done in such a pure and excellent way
 that it's almost exactly like the gospel
 4608 as everyone will tell you who was there.⁵⁰
 Then from the church and consecrated ground
 the count went with his retinue and rode
 4611 along with torches blazing all around.
 He reach the palace and went to his chamber
 and after more festivity they went
 4614 to bed, and slept until the next day dawned.
 And when the next day came, a solemn mass
 was celebrated by the holy pope
 4617 with every ceremony possible.
 And as the time for it was drawing near
 [f. 78r] the pope and cardinals entered the church
 4620 and all the other prelates in a throng.
 Secular lords of every kind were there,
 together with the count and my Lord Priors,
 4623 soldiers and noblemen and citizens.
 That day *ad laudem Dei*, mass was sung
 with ceremony such as I've not seen

⁵⁰ The *Festa dell'Ascensione*, performed by the Compagnia di Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnesa on the *tramezzo* of Santa Maria del Carmine. On the play generally see Nerida Newbiggin, *Feste d'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Florence: Olschki, 1996), chapter 2. No account books survive for the performance of 1459, and at the time of writing I was unaware of the present mention of the play. There is no mention of it in the anonymous *Ricordi di Firenze*.

4626 its like with my own eyes before that day.
 And afterwards, the most excellent Father
 went with his train so worthy and divine,
 4629 on the raised walkway, eminently worthy
 that went across the middle of the square⁵¹
 where all the citizens had come together
 4632 to go down on their knees in front of him.
 Then the pope gave them all his devout blessing
 in the name of the Father, of the Son,
 4635 and of the Holy Ghost, and in is role
 as shepherd of the Holy Mother Church
 he granted them indulgence for their sins
 4638 with beautiful and holy rituals.
 After much talk, the count came forward and kissed
 his foot, and asked permission to depart.
 4641 The pope blessed him and gave him leave to go,
 and said, ‘Outside Bologna wait for me,
 because early on Saturday I too
 4644 intend to take my leave from fair Florentia.’
 The count replied, ‘That which Your Holiness,
 for whom I live and die, commands of me
 4647 will certainly be done.’ Then as the pope
 began to go around and take his leave
 from all the people who were present there,
 4650 [f. 78v] the count turned and addressed the cardinals
 most sweetly, and then taking leave of them
 he turned to my most excellent Lord Priors
 4653 and in like wise he sought his leave of them
 and thanked them all in the most lucid words
 for the great honour they had done to him,
 4656 its magnitude beyond comparison.
 And, to conclude, they bartered an exchange
 with more offers and proffers of the heart
 4659 and soul than in the swearing of a contract.
 And in the end, this sweet and gentle person
 was bid farewell by my dearest Lord Priors
 4662 with an abundance of most tender tears.
 And when each one had clasped the other’s hand
 with purest heart and with most perfect love,
 4665 and then embraced and kissed each other, then
 each one returned to the place whence he’d come.
 And when the count got back to Cosmo’s palace
 4668 he dined amid rejoicing and delight.
 When he had dined, he called his stewards in
 and said to them as follows, ‘Let each man

⁵¹ The elevated walkway was first used for the dedication of Santa Maria del Fiore in 1436; it is discussed by Paolo Bertoncini Sabatini in “Dalla Gerusalemme celeste alla città terrena: le vie sopraelevate all’antica come *ornamentum urbano*,” in *L’uomo del Rinascimento: Leon Battista Alberti e le arti a Firenze tra ragione e bellezza*, catalogue of exhibition, Florence, 11 March – 23 July 2006, cur. Cristina Acidini and Gabriele Morolli (Florence: Mandragora, 2006), p. 419–420.

4671 get his horses ready ready to depart.’
 Afterwards he went to Cosmo’s chamber,
 that lord of all things beautiful and fair,
 4674 and there he found both Cosmo and his wife
 with their sons and their wives, and with his nephew,
 and all the little girls and boys and babies
 4677 and each to him did all possible honour.
 The count, with sweet and gracious words then said,
 ‘O fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers all,
 4680 [f. 79r] O dearest and most faithful perfect friends,
 I’m leaving you, for I must make my way
 to those I left when I came from Milan,
 4683 to father, mother, brothers and fair sisters.
 It never would be possible to thank
 you all as is my duty and your due,
 4686 for the great honour, so magnificent,
 that I’ve received from you here in this house,
 and from your excellent Lord Priors who
 4689 treated me as a most beloved son.
 And all the citizens together here
 have honoured me in such a way that I
 4692 cannot express the gratitude they’re due.
 I know how great and perfect was the love
 with which I have been honoured by each man
 4695 in Florence, and to all I give myself.
 I offer both our persons and our state,
 our property and all that we can do
 4698 to give support to your great magistracy.
 And to you, Cosimo, supreme and great,
 I offer all the might that we command
 4701 across our territory, high and low.
 And to you, Piero, with magnificence
 I offer everything that we can do,
 4704 along with state and property and presence.’
 And then most sweetly he went and embraced
 Cosimo, Pier, Giovanni and the rest,
 4707 and was unable to hold back his tears.
 Everyone sheds a tear and cries aloud
 in tenderness, and Cosimo then spoke
 4710 and said, ‘Those whom you see before you now,
 [f. 79v] my Lord, I now commend them to your care,
 that you in turn commend them to your father
 4713 at whose command they always will remain.
 Commend them in the same way to your mother,
 as faithful servants of both you and them
 4716 and of your progeny in times to come.
 And what we can, in power and in gold
 and people and all else, we offer now
 4719 to your most splendid and well-ordered state.
 And we hold dear the benefit that flows

from the benevolence and amity
 4722 that we share with your excellency today.’
 Tears pour forth on all sides abundantly,
 and bathe the lovely cheeks of all those present,
 4725 a mixture of both tenderness and joy.
 And then the noble count embraced Lorenzo
 and thanked him for the joust the night before
 4728 that he had staged with such festive delight.
 He said, ‘Brother, I ask you to consent
 for love of me, to wear my emblem, which
 4731 I now bestow on you with my own hand.
 Lorenzo answered him without delay,
 ‘And I accept it, Sir, and I shall wear
 4734 it with greatest happiness, joy and delight,
 and in my mind and body I will never
 tire of being at your service, noble Lord,
 4737 who are the fount from which all virtue springs:
 I’ve given you my body, heart and soul.
 If I’ve not done you honour, generous Lord,
 4740 pray, let my tender years be my excuse.’
 Now you can see if he is Piero’s son
 [f. 80r] and grandson of the noble Cosimo
 4743 and if he’s growing up a noble lord.
 The count then thanked him with clear-spoken words
 and kissed his face, so lovely and serene,
 4746 which brought their conversation to an end.
 Then the count, with a few more friendly words
 took his leave saying, ‘Farewell, all! Farewell!
 4749 Though I leave you, I take you in my heart’.
 And then his joyful, splendid lordship leapt
 upon his steed, a fine and handsome beast,
 4752 both holy and angelic in appearance.
 He left, accompanied by lords and knights
 and trumpeters, and many citizens,
 4755 and pages all decked out in livery.
 And right through all the Florentine republic
 he was received with every worthy honour
 4758 by our citizens charged along the way.
 And in this manner, the most excellent count
 was honoured as he set out on his way
 4761 from my flourishing city of Florentia.
 Every Florentine felt as if he’d been
 left lifeless, because everybody loved
 4764 the count with all their heart and one desire.
 Where Florence became sad, the other towns
 rejoiced when the most noble count stopped there,
 4767 and all the places where that splendid rose
 happened to pass in his magnificence,
 beyond compare in beauty and in virtue.
 4770 May Italy be glad like a fair bride

and may the duke be glad in such a son,
 with such a great and open heart, so wise
 4773 [f. 80v] and noble, and so learnèd in his counsel.
 And may Madonna Bianca too be glad
 to be the mother of so great a son
 4776 in whom no virtue and no beauty's lacking.
 And may the worthy members of his family
 be glad, the brothers, sisters, counts and ladies,
 4779 who see him taking flight on wings of fame.
 And may the great Visconti house be glad,
 and all his friends and relatives as well,
 4782 to see him make advances every day.
 Let Milan too be glad and all rejoice
 in adoration of his blessèd brow,
 4785 with all its citizens most excellent.
 And let Pavia too, that gave to him
 his countly title, join with Lombardy
 4788 both high and low, to celebrate this lord.
 Let all men great and valiant rejoice
 that he pursues the great magnificence
 4791 of his supreme and warlike coat of arms.
 And with them all let my Florence rejoice
 and every one of my Florentine people
 4794 that a prince so illustrious is their friend.
 And may most excellent Cosimo be glad,
 Piero and Giovanni and the rest,
 4797 the men and women of their families
 to have so great a lord as their true friend,
 and this friendship today can never die
 4800 not even when today's the distant past.
 Their glory's destined to forever bloom,
 and blood would sooner come forth from a radish
 4803 than would what I have said cease to be true.
 [f. 81r] No honey or *vin cotto* ever were
 as sweet as all the offers made each day
 4806 to Cosimo and Piero by the pope.
 Likewise the cardinals, while they were there
 came every day unceasingly to visit
 4809 them in the palace so grandly adorned.
 Then when dawn came and Phoebus was revealed
 next day on Saturday, the holy pope
 4812 revealed to all that he too would depart.
 At once, my good Lord Priors made the arrangements
 just as they had when he had entered Florence;
 4815 the Captains of the Guelfs did just the same.
 His Holiness was mounted on his steed,
 with my Lord Priors round, holding his bridle,
 4818 and all the ceremonies of departure
 are just the same as his arrival here:
 citizens, pages all with burning torches,

4821 and two baldachins, marvellous to behold.
 All the magistracies were there to see,
 with the all the rituals of the hats
 4824 and the umbrella and the three great flags.
 And in this fashion, worthy and adorned,
 accompanied by all the cardinals
 4827 bishops, prelates, and clergy in his train,
 the pope and all his people rode away
 until they reached the gate up at San Gallo.
 4830 When he arrived, the people fell upon him,
 and shouted, ‘Grab it, grab it, come on, grab it!’,
 and the great baldachin above the pope
 4833 was looted in a trice, with such a din
 I thought the world had been turned upside down,
 [f. 81v] and Judgement Day had come to all of us;
 4836 such is the custom of magnificence.⁵²
 My Standard Bearer, great and joyful, then
 commended to the Holy Father, lord
 4839 of all the world, the great Florentine people.
 He ordered that throughout Florentine lands
 everything was to be at his command:
 4842 both property and state, both young and old.
 The Holy Father then replied with thanks
 to the Lord Priors, and offered them himself,
 4845 and then he blessed them as he took his leave.
 And as he rode along the lovely road
 that travels most directly to Bologna,
 4848 with cardinals and citizens on horseback,
 he found that all his needs had been foreseen
 along the route through Florentine domain,
 4851 because our people long to serve him well.
 And right through our domain all the expense
 for him was met with great magnificence,
 4854 and in this way the Sienese pontiff left.
 My good Lord Priors, with Pius’s indulgence
 and with their magistracies then returned
 4857 to their most noble quarters in the Palace.
 Now you have heard, my dearest son, about
 the mighty honours that were organized
 4860 by the most noble Pier di Cosimo.
 Piero’s the cause, and so great is his power,
 and so great is the love my people bear him,

⁵² The ritual functions of this jostling are analysed in R. J. Ingersoll, “Ritual Use of Public Space in Renaissance Rome,” PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985, 172–4: “The ritual that was inherited from the 14th century included a hazing tradition in which the crowd tried to remove the horse from underneath the pope. This practice, along with the tradition of looting the palace of the newly elected pope, was a strident reminder that the papacy did not completely control the city. The ritual harassment was a playful yet real challenge to papal power in the city. [...] Pius II, for example, after his encounter with the unruly mob, wrote that he was ‘saved by divine aid’,” citing Piccolomini, *Commentarii*, 222 (l.35) and 232 (ll.1).

4863 that what he wants they do without delay.
 Pier does in Florence what God does in heaven,
 and he's been given all that grace by God.
 4866 [f. 82r] Therefore I ask you, dearest joyful son,
 to satisfy my wishes in all this,
 just as you promised me when we began,
 4869 and never fear that things will go amiss.
 If I receive this gift from you, my son,
 you will yet raise your hands up towards heaven
 4872 to thank me for the fact I rescued you.
 Now be quite sure you don't leave out a thing
 of what I've told you and put every part
 4875 in verse, with all the style that zeal can give.
 Bring diligence and skill and learning too,
 bring wit to this, and with your pen in hand
 4878 begin to cover pages with your lines,
 for I can feel already an impression
 that this work will be rudder, sail, and mast
 4881 and crossbar to your vessel small and weak."
 And I replied to her, "O sweetest Florence,
 I'm deeply moved as I now give you thanks,
 4884 because you are the key to the straight way.
 I could and would and will not ever turn
 away from what you ask, not as a chore
 4887 but willingly I'll do all that I can
 to sing your glory, mother dear and pure.
 Know that the longing in my heart for words
 4890 is more than your desire that I should speak.
 Know that I want to bring glory and fame
 to Cosimo and Piero and Giovanni,
 4893 whom my heart loves as Trinity on earth.
 I've spent my youth on vanities and not
 in virtue, and I cannot soar so high,
 4896 yet I have wings quite adequate for flight.
 [f. 82v] And yet, unflinching, my soul rejoices
 in Piero's fame, and never tires to tell
 4899 his glories and to sing his excellent praises,
 which rather are a food so nourishing
 that, if my wit or energy did fail,
 4902 they'd find a new resource of faith and zeal:
 an inner love, beyond what can be seen,
 the love I bear for Piero in my heart
 4905 fired by a flame that can never go out.
 Therefore, with purest faith and holy love
 I'm ready to recount his every glory
 4908 so as to do him honour everywhere.
 It needs to be a story full of fame
 and worthy and most notable events
 4911 to sing his virtue, power and renown.
 Grant me, Almighty Father, dearest Jesus,

4914 the grace of inspiration, that I may
 put into words Piero's magnificence.
 Devoutly I ask, my arms crossed on my breast,
 that you will make me say and do all that
 4917 is pleasing to both Cosimo and Piero.
 For you, O Florence, worthy and unique,
 I have resolved to serve in every detail
 4920 by rendering in verse what you have ordered,
 not adding or subtracting anything,
 and all my heart I dedicate to this."
 4923 And she replied to me, "Go, start at once!
 As you make Piero's glories known to all,
 be sure to keep in mind this final one
 4926 that shows the full extent of what he does.
 While the most excellent Holy Father stayed
 in Florence, over in the divine cloister,
 4929 the blessed soul of our dear monsignor
 and archbishop returned to to the great Parent,⁵³
 a man of such virginity and life,
 4932 as Saint Jerome himself is shown to us.
 He was a man of deep infinite learning,
 who helped the poor with money of his own
 4935 and got others to do the same as him.
 He was regarded as a saint in life
 and death by all my people near and far,
 4938 and all who were acquainted with this man.
 He scorned the world and all mortal delights,
 and all its pomp and gold, and chose instead
 4941 to follow in the steps of the apostles.
 And when his blessed and most glorious soul
 had made its way to heaven's divine choir,
 4944 they placed his body in San Marco where
 my people rushed to do it every honour,
 and for three days they kissed his hands and feet
 4947 and his fair brow that cast the sweetest odour.
 Then he was buried where you see him now,
 until the tomb is built that Piero has
 4950 ordered, with fine and worthy decoration.
 Citizens, prelates, everyone petitions
 the Holy Father on the vacancy,
 4953 insisting some one way and some another.
 Some for themselves, some intercede for others,
 as is the case in matters such as this,
 4956 and each one makes some offer, great or small.
 To each the pope replied with kindly words
 and said, 'I do not wish to decide here'.
 4959 [f. 83v] It's certain, there are some he'll not reward.
 But when Piero saw this holy man

⁵³ Antonio Pierozzi (1389–1459), archbishop of Florence, called Antonino for his diminutive size, died on 2 May 1459.

had died, he formed a plan within himself
 4962 that his replacement should be one like him,
 then, setting partiality aside,
 he turned his mind to finding someone who
 4965 was excellent and of the best repute,
 because he has decided in his heart
 to patronise the good and talented
 4968 with all that wealth and power can achieve.
 On this account men flocked to talk to him
 to little end, because he had resolved
 4971 to ask Messer Orlando de' Bonarli,
 a man prudent as any to be found,
 of honest life, who never, from the day
 4974 that he was born, turned from the holy truth.⁵⁴
 And having made his mind up on this matter,
 he sent men to the pope, Peter's successor
 4977 to ask on his behalf for this archbishop.
 The Holy Father graciously replied
 to Piero, and rejoicing with him said
 4980 that 'if he likes him then I like him too'.
 And so it happened, and Messer Orlando
 has been installed as Florentine archbishop,
 4983 just because Piero asked it of the pope.
 See what Piero can do, and how he governs
 everything, and if someone wants something
 4986 and is a friend of Piero's, then he'll have it.
 No constellation of the sun or moon,
 nor any influence of sky or planet,
 4989 nor any power ever in the world
 [f. 84r] could countermand the order and decree
 of God, that every man should obey Piero,
 4992 and those who do most serve him are most blest.
 Therefore, my son, harness your senses now
 and bring this worthy work to its conclusion
 4995 and I and Piero both will be well pleased.
 And I exhort you to pursue the banner
 of the great deeds of Piero yet to come
 4998 by grace infused in him by Him who reigns
 in heaven, which will so outrank the present
 deeds of fame and praise so glorious
 5001 just as the captain does the foot soldier.
 And let it not appear too burdensome
 to tell his tale to those who are to come,
 5004 for no such greatness ever was or will be.
 I love you dearly, therefore I implore
 that you will work on this until the end
 5007 and I will guarantee you peace to do it.

⁵⁴ Orlando Bonarli, jurist and Auditor of the Sacra Rota, was archbishop of Florence from 1459 to 1461; Vespasiano left a brief life of him; see Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1970), 253–5.

Your single favour will be repaid twice
 because both he and I will recompense you
 5010 for all your toils, and these are not just words.”
 I turned to her then, filled with sweetest joy,
 and answered, “Say nor more, for in my heart
 5013 I’m swooning for the sweetness that I feel.
 I could not be more happy than I am
 to tell of Piero’s great and noble glories
 5016 because all my heart holds I’ve given him.
 I do it not for vainglory or fame,
 I do it just for goodwill from my heart,
 5019 to make a worthy story of his deeds.
 I do it for I bear him a great love
 [f. 84v] and I shall turn his praises into rhyme
 5022 from the day he was born until he dies.
 From his birth to today is where I’ll start,
 putting in writing all you’ve said to me,
 5025 about his glory, immense and sublime.
 Well do I know that greater yet by far
 will be his future, worthy and sublime,
 5028 as you will hear me tell when I recite,
 because (so my intentions will be clear)
 I’ve all I need in paper, pens, and ink,
 5031 and fantasy to sing his future glories.
 Time by time, and without delay, I’ll make
 a record of his glory and his might,
 5034 in an appropriately joyous style.”
 And then she kissed me on the brow and said:
 “Farewell. Fulfil the promise you have made
 5037 and you will be rewarded, sweet my son.”
 And these words were the last thing that she said,
 and then she went away immediately,
 5040 and left me sleeping in my bed alone.
 In that same moment I felt all the pain
 it’s possible to have, and cried out loud
 5043 for her, and when she didn’t come, I woke.
 And opening my eyes and wondering,
 I knew that what she’d told me was all true,
 5046 because it all came clearly to my mind.
 I leapt from bed and took my quill in hand
 and worked from memory and imagination
 5049 until I’d put every last thing in verse.
 I’ve carried this whole story to the end,
 and now I send it to you, noble Piero,
 5052 [f. 85r] because it’s full of all your greatest glory.
 If it is good, then that’s due to to the subject;
 if it is bad, it grieves me quite to death
 5055 because it’s due just to my feeble wit.
 But one thing I can certainly make clear:
 namely that I have used all in my power.

5058 I crave pardon if I can do no better.
 And if you wished to know just who I am,
 know that I am a wretched, withered branch,
 5061 that cannot thrive when it is far from you,
 and asks for justice, equity and right,
 so that its contrite heart may be rewarded
 5064 and that compassion enter in men's hearts.
 Such do we see in God most loud and clear,
 for to all those who say, 'Have mercy on me'
 5067 he grants infinite mercy; this alone
 is the one thing that makes the wicked good,
 and costs but little to all those who give it,
 5070 men, that is, and not only supreme gods.
 If these things are the source of greatest profit,
 then let each person spend his mercy freely
 5073 to benefit his fellows at no cost.
 Piero, I ask you, light the mighty flame
 of charity, and use it towards me:
 5076 I've no one else to help me or defend me.
 Save me from anguish, rescue me from pain.
 Just be content that I have loved you well,
 5079 just be content that I do wish you well
 because from the first day when I was born
 by astral influence and by divine
 5082 justice I have been guided to serve you.
 [f. 85v] If you have never heard of me before,
 nor of the love I bear you in my heart,
 5085 it's due to negligence and not to malice.
 If I'd openly shown my heart to you,
 and followed close behind your worthy banners
 5088 where now I'm shipwrecked I'd be safely home.
 Better to realize late than not at all,
 therefore I throw myself into you arms,
 5091 begging you to ignore my tardiness.
 I'm buried neath a hundred feet of earth
 with no hope of relief: and this will be
 5094 my end, unless you send your might aid.
 I know you're free of all ingratitude,
 but one who let his worthy servant die
 5097 would be guilty of that accursèd vice.
 You can put flowers on a withered tree
 transform a whore into an honest maid,
 5100 and make a body walk that has no legs.
 You can be my foundation and my column,
 you can restore the hearing to my ears
 5103 and make a new cloak from a tatty rag.
 Just as a man who's drowning calls together
 all his limbs, skill and cunning and his wits,
 5106 just in time to preserve his graceless life,
 so I am drawing up a thousand plans

to make my limbs worthy enough to have
 5109 just one drop of your mighty clemency,
 because I've seen the bud amid the sticks
 and thorns of the dark forest in the winter
 5112 bring forth in April the unblemished rose,
 I come to you, my hands both clasped in prayer,
 [f. 86r] and with the prayer and faith of Constantine
 5115 by which his limbs were restored o good health,
 I offer up myself, as good as dead.
 And, if you'll have me, I will be more glad
 5118 than if I were lord of a great domain.
 No mighty wind was ever more intent
 on pushing tiny ships on crashing shores –
 5121 'tis but a moment twixt the word and deed –
 than I am now to bask in your fair rays.
 But time is short, and what I have moves fast,
 5124 it seems already leaves and blossom fall.
 Therefore I beg you, arms crossed on my breast,
 that you move swiftly now to lend me aid,
 5127 for delay doesn't help and does much harm.
 I know you know that when a racehorse runs
 it slows down at an obstacle and then
 5130 no spurs or whip or bridle are of use
 and he'd be passed by even some lame nag,
 that from the start had managed scarcely more
 5133 than just a little canter. And so I ask,
 in order that misfortune not befall me,
 be merciful to me for what's attached:
 5136 I can't present it with less clumsy words.
 I beg and pray, with all my might, that you
 in all your grace will stand by me, and I
 5139 do bind myself to serve you for all time.
 It will be to your glory that you bring
 light to a blind man, raise one who has fallen
 5142 and bring a dead man back to life with you.
 It will be to your fame that you have made
 a mute man speak, made lead float upon water,
 5145 and offered help to one in sorest need,
 made diamonds out of the most wretched crystal,
 and flames come forth from just the smallest spark,
 5148 and made new shoots come forth from withered sticks.
 And if, O generous Piero, you decide
 to give me one scintilla of your aid,
 5151 you'll yet restore me to a tranquil life.
 You'll be the reason for my elevation,
 to my advantage and your fame and honour,
 5154 because you are obliged and must assist me
 if you believe in helping those who love you.